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GENTLEMEN

• BURNHAM •



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To L. L. M. 7

From Puccini

Xmas 1897

75
Box



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and dates, which appears to be a record of some kind. The names are written in a cursive script, and the dates are in a more formal, printed style. The list is organized into two columns, with names on the left and dates on the right. The names are: John Smith, James Brown, and William Jones. The dates are: 1810, 1811, and 1812.

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"NO GENTLEMEN"

BY

CLARA LOUISE BURNHAM

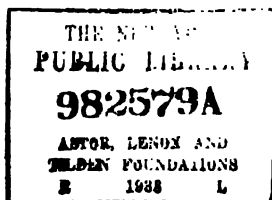
AUTHOR OF "YOUNG MAIDS AND OLD," "NEXT DOOR," "DEARLY BOUGHT,"
"A SANE LUNATIC"



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"NO GENTLEMEN."

CHAPTER I.

CAUGHT IN THE RAIN.

Thanks, untraced to lips unknown,
Shall greet me.—SNOW-BOUND.

Jean Ivory was caught in the rain. Fortunately, she appointed a rendezvous with her step-mother when she parted with her half an hour before, under as charming a blue sky as ever smiled down upon the city of Boston.

"Call for me with the carriage at D——'s drug store," she had said; so to D——'s she hurried now when the sudden rain fell, gathering her handsome dress regretfully about her, jealous of the myriad drops that were defacing its freshness.

So bent was she upon obtaining shelter, it was little wonder that she failed to notice a gentleman standing within the store, with his back to the door; and little wonder that she flung the door

open with an energy which drove its handle into the young man's back, and more natural still, that the latter, caring nothing for Miss Ivory's claret-colored brocade, should turn upon the new comer with exceeding displeasure.

"Pardon me," she said, scarcely looking at her victim, whose expression of disapproval changed to one of curiosity as he recognized her, and then sauntered to the back of the store.

Only yesterday she had been pointed out to him as a young lady who was destined to be the fashion in society the coming Winter—a young lady whose great-aunt had left her, with her Scotch name, a handsome fortune to be hers to do as she pleased with. This was the extent of his informer's knowledge; but it might have been added honestly that Jean pleased to do good with her money. Indeed, her earnestness as a philanthropist had already proved a sore vexation of spirit to her step-mother—a thoroughly worldly woman, who cared first for society, and next for her husband's handsome brunette daughter. As to the heiress's doting father, when his wife came to him with some new story of the girl's imprudence, he only said :



"These are Jean's wild oats. Let her sow them. She will learn wisdom by experience."

So, while Jean was learning wisdom, many a poor, suffering mother blessed her, many an impostor drank her health in a better grade of whisky than he was accustomed to, and many a charity drew its supplies largely from her purse.

Miss Ivory, unconscious of scrutiny, proceeded to take off the flimsy, wet veil which clung disagreeably about her face, and hang it over a counter to dry. Then she opened the little bag of claret velvet and silver which hung by her side, and took therefrom a handkerchief with which she wiped her face as she looked into the show-case at the cosmetics and glittering toilet articles.

"I wonder if she is thinking of the day when she will make a nearer acquaintance with those articles?" thought the young man, who appeared to be rain-bound also, and who was, with the exception of the proprietor and herself, the only occupant of the store. "Evidently, it has not come yet, or she would never dare to rub her face in that fashion. What a privilege it is to inspect the coming belle before her freshness is worn off by a score of Germans. Judging by the vigor of her strong right

arm, as experienced by me, she will be able to endure considerable dissipation."

"Yes, Mr. D——, I begin to think I am deserted," came the clear voice of the young lady, and as she turned to give a smiling answer to the proprietor of the handsome store, the cool critic in his distant position, was surprised into momentary admiration of the frank face and bright eyes.

"She will light up well at night," he was forced to admit ; but he liked a lady's movements to be quiet and dignified under all circumstances, and every motion this girl made was sweeping and daring. Had she been a man, she could not have bolted in out of the rain more suddenly, or given him a severer blow in the small of his back ; and, let who would compose her court in her coming season of triumph, he should certainly never swell the number.

Meanwhile, the future *débutante* was becoming very tired of the situation.

"What can mamma be thinking of?" she reflected, moving to the window and looking out on the gray sky. "If the wind and rain were half as weary as I, they would cease and set me free ; but I suppose I must possess my soul in patience ;" and

with a sigh, Jean seated herself on a plush-covered stool and swung idly from side to side, her eyes fixed absently on the red and green jars in the window. While she sat thus, voices in the back of the store attracted her attention.

“It’s all very well to speak of yours as a special case,” she heard Mr. D—— say ; “but if I listened to every ‘special case’ that comes here every day, I should be ruined. I can’t help them all.”

“No one wishes you to help them all,” was the strange gentleman’s reply ; and the contrast of his refined voice, after the proprietor’s nasal, complaining tones, struck Jean pleasantly.

“Out of so many applicants, one can only choose those who come well-vouched for. It is a hard case, you must admit, Mr. D——, to come down flat from riches to absolute penury ! You have said that there is a vacancy here, and I have relied upon you.”

If the carping critic could have seen the face of the girl, seated so quietly in the front of the store, he would have been obliged to admit that she lit up well by day as well as by night. Her dark eyes were shining, and her cheeks aglow. Jean’s philanthropic soul was in arms and eager for the fray.

"And I nearly knocked him down when I came in," she thought, remorsefully. "Oh, how painful it must be to him, to be going about among people who are his inferiors, seeking some humble situation."

"Think of the mother and sisters, Mr. D——," Jean heard him go on, "and an absolutely helpless paralytic father."

"Mercy!" ejaculated the sympathetic listener, under her breath. "Why, it's a case of absolute necessity." She fairly longed to go back and take part in the conversation, and even went so far as to turn about on her stool, but one look at the applicant caused her courage to ooze out. "How can he look so handsome and well-dressed when he is in such extremity?" she wondered, turning back. "Yet, if the blow is sudden, of course he has not had time to grow shabby yet." Then she strained her ears to hear the response of the proprietor.

"It isn't convenient; that's all there is about it. I have not made up my mind yet that I need supply the vacancy. The pay is very small, too."

"Never mind that," said the other, earnestly. "Half a loaf is better than no bread. Do not decide yet. I will come back this evening."

"You'd much better save yourself the trouble," was the ungracious rejoinder.

"I do not mind the trouble," said the young man persistently, and with this he passed down the store, and, pausing a moment at the door, looked once more at Jean, then went out into the rain.

"She is a handsome girl," he reflected in surprise. "If she looks at every one as she did at me then, they'll all go down before her. She actually looked as if she wanted to speak to me ; and I'm very sure I should like to have her."

Meanwhile, Jean's thoughts flew like wildfire. Here was a case, delicate to be sure, but one which demanded her attention.

That hard-hearted wretch of a druggist ! How she despised him ! Mr. D——, advancing toward her, smiling and bowing, found himself treated to a haughty flash of the black eyes, and a freezing dignity of manner which astonished him.

"No ; I will not trouble you," she replied to his offer to procure a carriage. "Neither will I stay another minute in your heartless, disobliging presence," she added mentally, and gathering up her long train and taking her umbrella, she sallied forth, careless now of the rain, only in haste to get

home and carry out the idea which had taken possession of her. She would help that fair, handsome unfortunate, with the golden moustache and close-cut hair, in spite of himself. As she entered a horse-car, and all the way home, she was quite oblivious of the commiserating glances bestowed upon her rich garments; oblivious of the fact that a muddy heel was pressed upon her silken train; only thinking of the joy of assisting these people, who had lost their all.

Upon arriving at home, the first person she met was her mother, coming down the stairs, in all the comfort of dry clothing.

"Jean, you didn't come home in all this storm!" exclaimed Mrs. Ivory, somewhat guiltily; but she need not have feared receiving any blame from her excited daughter.

"What did you expect me to do, mother; spend the night at D——'s?" asked the girl. "I must say I think you have exhibited a beautiful trust that I should get home somehow; but I forgive you."

"You see we managed to get here just as the first drops fell, and I told Sam to wait until it stopped raining before going for you. I thought

it such a pity to take the horses out in such a drenching storm."

"So it was I that was drenched instead. I think perhaps the horses would have come out better from the wetting, than my brocade."

"I should think so," replied Mrs. Ivory, in a complaining tone; for, now that she found Jean had no intention of taking her seriously to task for neglect, she turned her attention to the damage done.

"You might have had more patience, and waited a little," she said. "Your dress is entirely ruined, and it is the first time you have worn it!"

"Quite right in both particulars, lady mother, and all your fault. You must be more careful of me, and less careful of the horses, another time. Let me come up stairs, please."

"I will come with you," following Jean up the stairs. "I want to tell you something I heard to-day about Mrs. Darrell."

"Not just now. I have something particular to attend to."

"I knew you had some new crazy scheme, the instant I saw you," volunteered the lady, in a vexed tone. "You never look so beaming, except when you are planning to throw away a lot of

money. What an imprudent man your father is, to leave you in such unwise freedom."

"My father has little enough to do with it," replies Jean, gayly. "My aunt took good care of that. Her prophetic soul told her what a level-headed, long-headed, clear-headed woman of business her namesake was going to turn out."

"You'd much better confide in me, Jean! do, this time, like a good girl."

But Jean had hurried into her room and shut the door. Confide her precious plan, and have it criticized from all stand-points in a cool, calculating way? Never! Perhaps she felt that its feasibility and wisdom would not stand a severe test; but she was none the less possessed with the idea that it was a good thing to play Lady Bountiful in this delightful, secret manner, to the good-looking stranger, who should never suspect whose hand it was that had extended help in the hour of need.

"Half past two, I declare," thought the young woman, glancing at the tiny Swiss clock against the wall, "and I'm hungry; but business first, and pleasure afterward." Then slipping off her wet garments and donning a white flannel wrapper, she sat down at her desk.

“It won’t do to write a note,” muses the girl, “and yet, it would seem so like giving alms, merely to enclose money, without a word. I wish I knew the right amount, enough to look respectable, yet not so much as to make him feel that he could not accept it, and then could send some word with it to make him believe that the gift came from an old friend who would not desert him in adversity.” Jean looks absently out of the window at the dull sky. “Have I any right to send fifty dollars to an utter stranger, who may be the worst impostor on earth, for all I know? But, no; that couldn’t be! He couldn’t look so clean and pure, and have talked in such a heartfelt yet dignified voice to that unsympathetic, selfish old druggist. To think! from riches way down to penury, without any warning! Yes; the least I can do is to send him fifty dollars—if for no other reason than to give temporary assistance to the mother and sister; then, perhaps, I can find out who they are, and be of use to them in the future. I know Mr. D—— will have no good news for the poor fellow when he goes there this evening. I mean to try to get him a situation myself, if I can do it without being found out. Meanwhile, I must make the money do. Now for

the note! What in the world shall I say?" and Jean takes a sheet of paper and begins writing. "Dear me! It would hardly do to send my monogram;" and pushing the sheet aside, she takes another, which is blank, and in itself will tell no tales.

"A friend, happening to know that you are seeking a situation at D——'s, takes this method of offering you assistance, with the hope that you will have no hesitation in accepting and using the amount enclosed, for the benefit of your afflicted family."

"There, I think that is a singularly happy wording!" and Jean viewed her dashing, angular handwriting with satisfaction. "No clue! absolutely none! Nothing to do but spend the money and ask no questions."

She folded the bills within the written sheet, and enclosed the whole in an envelope which she sealed, then on another sheet she wrote:

"Will Mr. D—— be so kind as to hand the enclosed to the gentleman who will call on him this evening, with regard to a situation?"

Wrapping the money-envelope in this sheet, she tucked the little package into another envelope,

which she directed to the druggist ; then throwing a blue shawl about her shoulders, she went down stairs, and, sending for Sam, gave him minute and emphatic directions, to each of which he responded with a nod of his woolly head and a "Ye-es 'm, ye-es 'm," accompanied by a grin, which meant that he would do his best for his young mistress, at any time.

Jean returned to her room, and Mrs. Ivory, coming out of the sitting-room, intercepted the messenger.

"Did Miss Jean give you anything, Sam?" she asked carelessly.

"Ye-es 'm ; she gi' me twenty-five cents."

"Anything else, Sam?"

"You'd better ask Miss Jean. She'll tell you all about it. She's sent me an arrand, and I'se got to hurry ;" and the man passed the angered lady of the house, secure in the sense of "Miss Jean's" protection, while Mrs. Ivory turned back into her sitting-room, more vexed than ever at the impulsive girl, who insisted upon her high prerogative of making ducks and drakes of her fortune, by giving it in little driblets to all who excited her sympathy.

CHAPTER II.

THE LUNCH PARTY.

Beauties—every shade of brown and fair.—THE PRINCESS.

"Girls, what will you wager that Jean will forget to wear her class ring?"

"Jean will do nothing of the sort! The very idea is heresy, when we promised faithfully to wear them whenever we should all five be together; and do you think that the very first time, any one of us would forget? Perish the thought!" exclaims Ruth Exeter, the hostess, turning her own ring on her finger.

"Well now, you see," remarks the first speaker, in a teasing tone, "of course, you, Ruth, are supposed to know Jean better than any of the rest of the class; but I know her well enough to be sure that any thing would suffice to drive it out of her head, and if I prove to be right, won't we just glory over her?"

"If she does forget it, Mabel, it will not be any thing to wonder at, for she has so many rings,"

says modest little Barbara Waite. "I am so proud of mine, that I scarcely ever take it off."

"Polly, you are the only one that has n't had her say, says Ruth. "What is your private opinion, publicly expressed, of Jean's loyalty?"

The languid girl, thus addressed, shakes her head: "I should not presume to question it. You know her Highness always snubs me; so I prefer to be neutral."

"There she is! There's the carriage!" exclaims Ruth. "We are out of school—full-fledged young ladies, and this is a formal and select lunch party; but I'm going to the door myself," suiting the action to the word.

"What made you so late, Jean? Did you wear it?"

"Wear it? How do you do, Mab, Barbara, Polly?" kissing each of her school friends as she names her.

"Yes; your ring, you know. Of course, you wore it?"

Jean falls back a step and looks at Ruth, in sincere woe.

"You didn't, you perjured girl, when we promised!"


"So we did," says Jean, slowly. "I'm dreadfully mortified."

"If there's a mean spirit under heaven, it is that which says 'I told you so ;' but I did tell you so, remember," says yellow-haired Mabel Grant, "and I wish now we had made the wager something definite."

"What! Have you been talking about it? I am just horrified at my own breach of faith, and am willing to accept any punishment you think proper—from being rolled in a barrel lined with spikes, to giving you a dozen pairs of gloves apiece."

"We'll let you off from any thing so bad as that," says Ruth, taking the new comer's hat and gloves, "only," with a significant glance at the other girls, "what made you forget it?"

"What made me forget it?" repeats Jean, with perplexed brow; then, with sudden irrelevancy, "think, girls!" she exclaims, "how excited we were a week ago to-night. How we covered ourselves with glory and flowers; and how much better than all the rest Mousie's essay was!" and she pinches Barbara's ear. "Wouldn't it be nice if we could have the other girls here? It has been trails in the morning, trails at noon and trails at night,



for me, ever since," adds Jean, incoherently, as she sweeps down the long drawing-room, looking over her shoulder at her long dress.

"Yes, we are all playing at long dresses," says Ruth, "all but Barbara, who is too sensible to play at any thing, and is going to remain a little girl; and let us abuse her all we please."

Barbara looked up at tall Ruth, and down at her own brown muslin frock, and thought for the dozenth time to-day, that surely no girls were ever so lovely as her class-mates. The little Barbara's position might easily have been made forlorn enough among her wealthy sister pupils, for she was very poor, and shrinkingly modest and sensitive; but Jean had taken her up, and the others had followed the fashion, at least in appearance; so here, in this first reunion of the Boston members of the graduating class of '78, Barbara Waite found herself in a handsome house on Commonwealth avenue, wondering at and enjoying its luxury, and profoundly appreciating the kindness of heart which allowed her to feel no difference between ten-cent muslin and silk grenadine.

"Those reminiscences are all very well in their season, Jean," says Mabel; "but you are trying

to dodge Ruth's question. Tell us what weighty matter made you forget your ring?"

"It requires no weighty matter to make me forget everything I ought to remember. You know that!" returns Jean, seating herself and using her fan.

"Why, she's blushing," remarks Polly, curiously.

"People usually blush in July, don't they?" asks Miss Ivory, sharply. "What a change this is from yesterday! Who was caught in the rain, beside me?"

"I was," says Barbara, eager to help her adored Jean to change an unpleasant subject. "What a strange, cold day it was, for the month!"

"Yes; but it is Summer to-day, in earnest," says Ruth, rising to open a window. "Just about the right temperature for me. Red-headed people always like warm weather, don't you know? It suits their fiery temperaments."

"It is strange; but I liked yesterday better than to-day," says Jean, with a gleam of mischief in her brown eyes. "I enjoyed it thoroughly."

"See here, girls," says Mabel; "Jean has a

secret, and it is against the rules. Let's make her tell it. Ruth, you must help."

"Oh, Ruth doesn't care," observes Polly, lazily. "She knows Jean will tell her, the minute they are alone."

"Well, I never in my life saw such a set," laughs Jean. "I supposed we were going to have an amicable little season of mutual congratulation, and instead, I have been pitched upon and cross-questioned ever since I came in. Remember, we are out of school now, and all levity should be a thing of the past. There is Mrs. Exeter; how glad I am to see her!" and Jean rises to greet Ruth's mother, who has just entered the room, and who is her ideal of all that is good and womanly.

"So we have you all home for good now, my dear," she says, holding Jean's hand a moment after she has spoken to the others, as she looks up affectionately into the bright face.

"Yes, Mrs. Exeter, as Professor Laramie informed us a week ago to-night, the world is before us where to choose—or words to that effect—and you see how we are beginning our new life. Our motto is, 'United we stand; divided we fall.'"

"Yes, five good friends, and that is rather strange, too," says the lady; "I should think that in such a number there must be an odd one."

"There usually is with us, Mrs. Exeter," says Polly Gunther, abandoning her lolling position and speaking brightly; "but it is not always the same one. When Jean snubs me, it is I; when Mabel goes too far in teasing one of us, it is she, and when Ruth——"

"Young ladies, please walk out to lunch," interrupts Ruth, in a loud voice. "Polly, you were on the point of letting my mother know that I am not perfect. The shock of the discovery would have been too great for her."

The double doors at the end of the drawing-room open as if by magic, and disclose the handsomely laid table in the dining-room beyond.

"Miss Waite, may I have the pleasure?" continues Ruth, offering her arm to Barbara with a flourish.

"How splendid and tall you are, Ruth!" says the little woman, taking the arm.

"Yes, of the billiard-cue build—what the poets call willowy. There, Barbara, you sit between

Jean and Mabel ; then, if Mab teases you, you can tell Jean."

"The idea of my teasing, now that I am fairly in society !" says Mabel ; "I feel my dignity too much. But, Mrs. Exeter, do you think Jean has any right to keep secrets from the rest of us ? She is fairly bursting with one, yet ——"

"I will," interrupts Jean, magnanimously. "I will tell you, for I know just how I should feel in your place ; but of course you will keep it a secret ; you will not let it go beyond this dining - room ?"

"No, no !"

"Very well ; prepare to turn every color of the rainbow with jealousy. No wonder I liked yesterday better than to-day, in spite of wind and weather. I received a letter from Professor Laramie, and what should you all say if I told you that he conferred upon me the title of Bachelor of Arts ?"

"Jean ! you, a bachelor !" exclaim all but Ruth, who is not to be taken in by the compressed lips and mysterious nods with which Jean is favoring her audience.

"I did not wish to tell you, my modesty is so

sensitive ; but you would have it, and I am so foolishly yielding that I was obliged to defer to you. Polly, your appetite is not gone, I hope ? " looking at Miss Gunther, who seems overcome.

"How absurd !" says Mabel. "You must be joking, Jean ! I did not know our professors conferred degrees ; and, if they do, why did you not receive yours last Thursday night ? "

Jean shrugs her shoulders. "Now I hope you'll let me alone," she says.

"Girls, I wish your undivided attention," speaks Ruth, imperatively. "I have been thinking much, since I came home, of what we are all going to do this Summer ; and I shall catechize you separately, commencing with Barbara, because she is the smallest. Barbara Waite, you are on oath. What are you going to do this Summer ? "

"Save up strength for the Winter," replies the girl, promptly ; and Ruth immediately stigmatizes herself as a "stupid," for having expected that the little brown bird could have any plans for a gay holiday.

"Just my doctrine," she says aloud. "Polly Gunther, speak, and let the worst be known ! "

"Aunt Martha is going to Newport. I dare say, if I tease hard enough, she will take me."

"Mabel Grant; the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," continues Ruth, impressively.

"My mother and I are going to spend a month with some friends, in their cottage by the sea."

"Jean?"

"My mind is a serene blank, my dear, so far as the future is concerned. I suppose mother has her plans; but she has been so busy dressing me to suit her, the past week, that we haven't mentioned the subject. Now, turn about being fair play, what does the right honorable Ruth Exeter intend to do this Summer!"

"Order! exclaims Ruth, rapping the handle of her fork on the table. "I have the floor, and have no intention of relinquishing it for the present to any girl, bachelor or benedict. My friends, you are all under twenty years of age—that is, all except ma—and are, therefore, young."

"What a marvelous gift of language!" exclaims Jean, in an undertone, at the same time raising an imaginary eyeglass, through which to gaze admiringly at her friend.

"What we all need is rest, after the arduous course of study which we have just completed," continues Ruth, "and I tell you, girls," dropping suddenly from oratory to familiar speech, "if we do not need it now, we shall need it badly enough next Winter, and as Barbara says, what we want to do is to bottle up strength for the coming campaign; and a watering-place is no place to do it."

"Hear! hear!" says Mabel.

"Just think of the fatigue and excitement of keeping all the time dressed up, and hopping half the night, to say nothing of taking your death of cold strolling on the piazza with gentlemen who wonder whether your father really has money, or whether your diamonds are rented! Beside all that, if we go, we shall be comparatively old stories next Winter, to many, when we come out. My sister, Mrs. Fellows — Jean knows her — says she wouldn't do it for any thing, if she was us."

"Ruthie, dear, do talk slower, and be a little more of a credit to Professor Laramie's class in grammar," interrupts Mrs. Exeter, laughing.

"Yes'm. Now, girls, there is a pasture fair where we may all be turned loose this Summer, and then be ready to flash like meteors upon the

social world of Boston next Winter. A paradise of cream and honey — and the angel that beckons us on is Hopeful Bounce, of Pineland, Mass. John,” to the servant, “please bring me the morning paper.”

“You are carrying your audience with you, Ruth,” says Polly.

“That is precisely what I wish to do ; to carry you, every one, with me,” returns Ruth, as the paper is handed to her. “Just listen to this :

“ ‘Wanted, lady boarders for the Summer, in a farm-house, located in a pleasant spot near running water. Children, whose mothers would like to leave them for some weeks in a healthful place, may also be taken ; but no gentlemen. Apply, either personally or by letter, to Hopeful Bounce, Pineland, Mass. *No gentlemen.*’ Hear that, girls ! The advertisement actually repeats the warning in italics, as though Hopeful Bounce expected to be swooped down upon by a horde of the male sex, the instant her attractive advertisement should meet their eyes. Well, what do you think of it ? ” and Ruth leans back in her chair, quite oblivious of the tempting ices and fruit which are set before her.

Jean is the first to reply : “Probably some out-

of-the-way, inland place, where it would be suffering warm all the time, and a swarm of mosquitoes would cluster about our heads, and follow us wherever we went."

"And no gentlemen," remarks Mabel, in honest disapproval.

"We should eat each other up in a week, just for a little excitement," adds Polly.

"Well, Barbara," says Ruth, "you are the only one who has not crushed my pet plan."

"I think it sounds very delightful," says Barbara, heartily; "but of course, it can not affect me personally."

"Ruth," says Jean, after some moments thought, "all things considered, your idea is a good one. I hope Pineland is not quite out of the world; but I will go with you, with all my heart, and we will bottle up so much strength and good looks, as entirely to outshine these watering-place belles, when it comes to a matter of active service, next Winter."

"Oh, if you go, I wish to," says Mabel.

"And I am determined to," adds Polly.

Barbara looks up smilingly. It is a matter of course that she can not be in her dear girls' good

times—something to which she has made up her mind ; but she is glad for Ruth that powerful Jean has again led the fashion in the right direction. The latter speaks again calmly, but as one in authority :

“Any one who goes to Pineland must make up her mind to bear and forbear under all possible trials, or else pack her little trunk and return home; for we can not have any malcontents in Arcadia. So, look before you leap.”

“Did you ever see any thing like Jean?” asks Ruth, turning to her mother. “A moment ago this was my plan ; now, she will engineer the whole matter, conduct the business arrangements and enforce discipline. All I ever have to do is to set the ball rolling, and Jean will keep it going.”

“That is the whole difference between mind and matter,” observes Jean. “I am the machinery. You just pour in the gray matter of the brain, and I grind it out into practical shape. Now, I am in favor of applying in person to Hopeful Bounce. Will you go with me, Ruth, perhaps to-morrow?”

“Impulsive as usual,” says Mrs. Exeter. shaking her head.

“Why not strike while the iron is hot?” con-

tinues Jean. "If the girls are quite sure they will go, we shall want several rooms, and can have first choice."

"Of course, you don't include me?" says Barbara.

"Perhaps I do," responds Jean, coolly. "Will you go to-morrow, Ruth?"

"Yes—if I should happen to recover my breath by that time. I can not follow you, you go so fast."

"Then, Mrs. Exeter, with your permission, I will take your daughter home with me this afternoon, to spend the night, and to-morrow we will set forth on our travels. Shall we not engage board for you, as well?"

"No, indeed; I can not go to a place where they divorce husband and wife."

"Hopeful Bounce must be a kind of modern Princess Ida," remarked Mabel. "I have no doubt we shall find on her gate the inscription, 'Let no man enter here on pain of death.'"

"Then I don't see how Jean will be admitted," smiles Barbara; "she will have to keep it secret that she is a bachelor."

"She's no more a bachelor than I am," asserts

Miss Gunther, scornfully. "She has n't taken me in, if she has the rest of you."

"Then Miss Ivory has told a wrong story," says Mabel, decidedly.

"Not at all," says Jean, off her guard. "I asked you what you should all say if I were a bachelor, and not one of you has answered me, or said whether you would be glad or sorry. I think you're hardly polite."

"And Jean's secret, if she has one, is as safe as ever," remarks Mrs. Exeter.

Yes, Jean's secret, which she finds so absorbing, is safe. Since she sent away her anonymous gift, yesterday, but little else has occupied her mind, than thoughts of her unknown *protégé*: What he thought when he saw the money; whether it came in time to relieve some pressing petty need; which of his friends he had decided upon as the donor; whether his pride was injured, or his heart filled with gratitude? These questions and dozens beside have pressed into her mind. Never before has a charity so taken hold upon her interest, and she considers it a delightful beginning to her new life.

Jean Ivory knows how to keep her own secrets;

but, while she and Ruth are driving home, late this afternoon, the temptation is too great to be resisted, to tell her friend the whole story. There seems no particular reason why she should keep it from Ruth, for the Exeters have been associated with her many a time in deeds of charity, and Jean has become accustomed to talking over such matters with this friend.

"And he is handsome, you say?" is Ruth's first question, upon hearing the story.

"Why, yes, I think so," returns Jean, doubtfully; then adds enthusiastically, "his face is so clean."

"How odd!" exclaims Ruth. "I wonder if I shall ever be permitted to gaze upon this eighth wonder?"

"Hush," laughs Jean; "don't you know, some people impress you as being pre-eminently clean? Well, he does, his teeth are so white and his skin so fair."

"Why, bless his little heart," murmurs the irrepressible Ruth.

"Oh, no," says Jean, determined to be literal, "he is a very big unfortunate."

"Big enough for me? Oh, where is he?" and

Miss Exeter settles her hat and smoothes on her gloves, as if to make an immediate assault. "I will raise him from penury before his clean face has had time to get soiled, and marry him just as a reward of merit for being tall."

"Behave, Ruth! Now, do you think I could go to Mr. D——, and question him with sufficient caution to find out who this man is, and so find a situation for him, without being found out myself?"

"How should Mr. D—— know him? He was probably one of a dozen applicants."

"True enough," says Jean, disappointedly. "I do not know why, but I had quite settled it in my own mind that Mr. D—— knew all about him. That is the reason why I hardly feel like hurrying away from the city yet. I feel a care of that young man's family."

"Well, you are a good, unselfish girl, to take so much interest in my plan, when your heart is not in it."

"Oh, yes, it is," returns Jean, disregarding her friend's teasing tone; "you know I can not bear to dawdle over things. I want to go right ahead with a plan."

"Good or bad, I suppose," observes Ruth.

"That is what mother thinks," laughs the other.

"If I would dawdle a little more, and study over the pros and cons of an idea a month or so, she would be better satisfied."

"You and Mrs. Ivory are very good friends in these days?" asks Ruth, with a quick glance at her friend.

"Yes ; we agree on all subjects but the use of money," replies Jean, smiling.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNGRACIOUS RESPONSE.

Like a dream, the whole is fled.—ROGERS.

Dinner is over. Jean and Ruth are with Mr. and Mrs. Ivory in their sitting-room, regaling them with bits of school news, which have not yet had time to grow stale.

“I can not realize yet that we are not going back in the Fall,” Ruth is saying, when the door opens and a servant enters, bringing a note on a salver.

“For Miss Ivory,” she says.

Jean takes the sealed envelope and looks at the superscription. “Miss Ivory, Addressed,” is what she sees written in a strange hand-writing, and evidently that of a gentleman.

Mrs. Ivory’s curious eyes fasten upon it immediately. She sees that the puzzled look on her step-daughter’s countenance is not feigned.

“Read it, Jean,” she says; “we will excuse you.”

Jean takes a pearl-handled knife from a table, near, and opens the note. She may be more breezy in her movements than her *protégé* approves, but she is graceful in every thing she does, from the greatest to the least, and would no more tear open a letter than she would be untidy in her dress.

Pressing the edges of the envelope, she draws out the paper within, and something protruding slightly therefrom meets her eye. It is money ! With a mighty rush, all the blood in her body seems to press into her face and neck ; but she controls herself well. She knows in a moment what has come back to her ; knows the denomination of each bill in the envelope ; knows what hand penned the superscription ; and also knows that if her mother should catch an inkling that any thing unusual is going on, she will be questioned and cross-questioned beyond all endurance.

The color recedes from face and throat, leaving the clear whiteness of her skin just as usual, as, with a careless pat of her hand, she sends the tell-tale enclosure back into the envelope.

"I know what it is," she says indifferently ; but Mrs. Ivory has seen the rush of color and the involuntary start.

"Is it an answer to the note Sam carried yesterday?" she asks.

"It is one of my little business affairs, which is at last settled up. I couldn't think of troubling you with the details," returns the girl, as coolly as though her heart were not drumming out a quickstep against her ribs, with excitement, disappointment, mortification, and a curiosity to know whether or no any words accompany the enclosure, and, if so, what they may be.

"Yes; I dare say, the details would trouble me," retorts Mrs. Ivory. "I think your father is the person to conduct your business affairs."

"So you have mentioned at various times, my dear," says Mr. Ivory, pleasantly. "Jean knows that I am always at her service when she needs me."

Jean, who is sitting next her father, reaches out her hand and gives him an appreciative little squeeze, and, as Jean's hand is simply perfect in shape, size and color, and its touch like fine satin, her father enjoys the caress correspondingly.

Ruth is accustomed to these wordy wars on the subject of Jean's freedom, and to her Mrs. Ivory addresses her next remark :

"Jean has need of a combination of qualities, which is simply impossible in a girl of her age, in order to govern her fortune properly ; but then, it is none of my business, and I do wish I could let the matter alone ;" and her companions echo the lady's wish heartily. "Every one knows," she continues, "that Mr. Ivory is a little touched in the head where Jean is concerned, and thinks she can do no wrong."

"If that is the case, father," says Jean, "perhaps you will consider it right for me to go to my room. Ruth and I wish to get a long sleep to-night, as we are going on an excursion to-morrow."

"Where?" asks Mr. Ivory.

"To Pineland, a little village hardly more than an hour's ride from Boston ; and when we learn certain facts, we will lay before you a plan which we have for the Summer, which is so very exemplary, healthful and *economical*, that even mother will approve it. Come, Ruth."

So the young ladies say good-night and go up to their room. Jean lights the gas, closes the door, and seats herself at a table, while Ruth takes up an autograph album and appears to be deeply interested in its contents, in order to give Jean oppor-

tunity to read her letter undisturbed. She suspects that the note has to do with the adventure of which her friend has told her ; but one peculiarity of Ruth's is, never to show undue interest in other people's affairs, and she is such a wonder among women in this particular that, if Jean says not one word more about her letter, Miss Exeter will sleep just as sweetly as though nothing had happened.

There is a short silence ; then a slight sound attracts Ruth's attention, and, turning, she sees Jean with hands upon the table and face bowed upon her hands. Beside her lies a confused heap of paper and greenbacks.

Ruth is at a loss what to do. She does not wish to force her friend's confidence, but Jean's attitude is so suggestive of tears and misery, that it seems heartless to say nothing. She draws near and stands a moment, irresolute ; then, laying a hand on the glossy black hair, asks :

“Jean, are you crying?”

The suddenness with which Miss Ivory starts up, upon this, causes her friend to retreat a step and stare in amazement at the flushed face and bright, tearless eyes that regard her.

"Crying? No, I am not crying. I am simply dying with rage and mortification?"

"Then it *is* about your *protégé* with the clean face?"

"Clean face? Who says he has a clean face! I can remember it now—a supercilious, high and mighty, insupportable face; and I wish I had never seen it."

Silence for a minute, during which Ruth tries not to laugh, and hopes Jean is not going to cry. But she need not fear that. Miss Ivory was never further from weeping.

"Could any thing—if one thought over it for a year—could *any thing* be more humiliating? It is bad enough, and lowering and silly enough, to try to be anonymous and fail, to say nothing of—Oh, Ruth, I *won't* bear it!" and down goes the face on the hands again.

"But I don't know what you are talking about, Jean," says Ruth, fearing that something very dreadful must have come of her friend's cherished plan.

"So you don't!" exclaims Jean, straightening up again as suddenly as before; "but you will know in a minute, for I will read you the whole

thing, but I won't touch it again. Hand me my crimping-irons out of that drawer."

Ruth complies, and Jean picks up the letter by one corner, between the irons, and, holding it thus, reads in a clear tone :

" 'Boston, July 2, '78.'

"That's this morning, Ruth, when I was getting ready to go to your lunch, and thinking all the time of how happy—but no matter.

" 'MISS IVORY : I was for a time completely at a loss what to think of the surprising note and enclosure which were handed me last evening ; but as I soon recalled the fact of your presence in D——'s drug store, yesterday, while I was trying to secure a situation for a friend, it was quite easy to select you as the anonymous giver.

" 'Although you, under the mistaken idea that I myself was in need, have intended your generous gift for my use, I should not return it to you upon that account, for I comprehend perfectly that it was the sufferer whom you wished to assist, and not the man ; but I can hardly think that you had taken sufficient time to reflect, before giving the sum of fifty dollars to an entire stranger. Moreover, my friend has done better for himself than I

was able to do for him, and has secured a desirable situation ; so I return to you by safe hands the money which, perhaps, ought not to have left yours, without a greater knowledge of the facts, and subscribe myself, yours truly.’ ”

Jean stops and looks eloquently at her friend.

“ ‘Yours, truly’ — what ? ” asks Ruth.

“ Nobody. ‘Yours truly ;’ that is all ; but I do not need any name for the self-sufficient prig that could write that letter ; ” and Jean hurls the sheet from her with all her force, but, with the arbitrariness of letter-paper, it describes a small circle in the air and lands in her lap.

“ How delicate of him, not to sign his name, ” says Ruth. “ I can imagine just how he reasoned it out, that you would probably not remember a face which you had hardly had a fair look at, and that if you were in ignorance of his name, you would not be embarrassed if in the future you should meet him. ”

“ Do you think that makes it any pleasanter for me ? ” asks Jean, sharply. “ I know just what kind of a person he is — loftily perfect, never forgetting any thing he ought to remember, or remembering any thing he ought to forget. There

is one thing I wish I could forget, which I never shall, and that is his disagreeable face."

"What a pity that it was so strikingly clean," observes Ruth, musingly.

"Ruth Exeter, I believe you are taking that man's part, and teasing me."

"You see I can not forget that he is tall, and that covers such a multitude of sins with me," smiles Ruth. "I have to snub almost every man that comes near me, you know, I feel such a giant-ess beside most of them."

"What a pity that I told you any thing about it," says Jean, gloomily, looking into space; "it would be so much easier to bear, if no one knew about it, but myself."

"Why, how you are exaggerating!" says Ruth, in a different tone, while she kneels by her friend's side, and Jean leans her elbows on the table and supports her chin on her hands.

"What is it, after all, that you are making so much of? You have tried to do a generous act secretly, and have been found out in it."

"Yes, I have; and while I have been imagining the heart-felt gratitude of 'Yours truly,' and glorifying myself and telling you all about it, he

has been raising his eyebrows in lofty surprise and writing me a reprimand as though I were his ward, at the very least. No, don't say another word about it. I shall never get over it—never. Wise Hopeful Bounce! I long to enroll myself beneath the banner of one who will 'make it death for any male thing but to peep at us.' Let us go to bed and to sleep, and dream of Pineland," finishes Jean, rising abruptly, and Ruth wisely refrains from saying any more on the subject.

But Jean does not sleep until the small hours. Her disappointment is very great, and her chagrin disproportionate to the occasion. She feels herself at so great a disadvantage with this stranger, who, it appears, knows her, and who has not hesitated to show his disapproval of her impulsive generosity.

"What would mother not give to know of this adventure," she thinks; and the thought is so disagreeable that Jean rises from her uneasy couch, and, stealing about quietly, in order not to disturb Ruth's slumbers, gathers together the letter itself and such little scraps, left about her desk from yesterday, as bear upon the subject—the request to Mr. D——, that he will hand the enclosed, etc.;

the exhortation to the unknown to have no hesitation in using the money, of which latter she had made several copies before getting one to satisfy her, and the calm reply ; then, vindictively crumpling them into a little ball, she looks around for something in which to burn them, finally emptying a bronze card-receiver, into which she drops the ball, and, setting fire to it, watches it burn and turn to ashes.

“How overcome he was by grateful emotions !” she thinks, remembering with scorn her eager conjectures. Looking around, she espies, lying on the floor, the envelope which contained the words that have disquieted her so greatly. She picks it up and looks at it :

“‘Miss Ivory, Addressed.’”

“Miss Ivory, you had better keep that,” she reflects. “It escaped the holocaust, in all probability, because it still has a mission to perform ; and when ever you feel particularly well satisfied with a feat in future, just come and cast your eye upon this.”

Then taking the bills from the table and tossing them loosely into a drawer of her dressing-case, Jean puts the envelope in a place of safety and goes back to bed—this time, to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

HOPEFUL BOUNCE.

Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O. — BURNS.

The next morning finds the two friends ready to set forth on their quest. Jean's eyes are brighter than usual, but no reference does she make to the events of the previous evening.

Mr. Ivory puts the young ladies on the train, and asks no questions, as is his reprehensible custom.

It proves rather a silent ride, for Jean is buried in thought, and Ruth does not disturb her.

"Only fifteen minutes before we are due, Ruth," she says at last, consulting her watch; then to the conductor, who is just passing: "Are we not due at Pineland at 11:30?"

"Yes, ma'am. I suppose you understand that we do not go through Pineland?"

"Do not?"

No; we go through Pineland Centre. There'll

be a stage there that will take you to Pineland ;” and he passed on.

“Well, Ruth, the plot thickens.”

“Yes. What if it is a dreary, deserted place that will make us home-sick to look at?”

“In that case, we will look at it as short a time as possible and come away.”

“Oh, Jean ; how in the world shall we direct the driver? That wholesale man-hater never signified whether she was Mrs. or Miss.”

“Here we are,” says Jean, by way of answer ; and Ruth follows her out upon the platform.

As they step from the train, the former sees the conductor standing near :

“Show us the Pineland stage, please,” she says.

“Oh, certainly,” leading the way to where three stages are backed up against the platform.

“Here, Dan,” he calls to the driver of a broken-down, forlorn old conveyance, “here are two passengers for you. That farthest one, ladies ;” then he boards the train which is already in motion, and Jean and Ruth look at one another in amazement.

“That thing, Jean ! We *can't* get into that rattle-trap.”

"Yes, we can — we have to. Why, how delightfully primitive this — what-is-it is!"

"Do wait till the train gets out of sight," implores Ruth, beginning to giggle; "do look as if we were intending to go any where but to Pine-land proper."

The driver leaves the sleepy old horses and holds the door open.

"Never let it be said that we were slaves to appearances," murmurs Jean, as she enters; and as soon as the girls are seated, the man fastens a strap across the vehicle directly under their chins, meanwhile chewing in an undisguised and nonchalant manner.

"This is too much!" exclaims Ruth, as the driver ascends to his place. "Is he afraid we will slip off the seat, or that we shall escape without paying our fare?"

"I don't know," replies Jean; "but I'm determined not to show any surprise, whatever the aborigines do to me. I feel like Georgiana Podsnap, trying to see over the front of the chariot. Why, Ruth, he has started, and he does n't know where to take us!"

Ruth's only answer is to laugh, and continue to

laugh, until the tears roll down her face. Jean follows her friend's tearful eyes to the tattered canopy under which they are sitting, and laughs too, but is too much in earnest to lose her self-control.

"Sit back, Ruth, then you will not be jolted against the strap. Think of all this, within an hour and a half of the Hub. There is a lady going to get in ; do stop laughing, you will hurt her feelings."

So Ruth sits back in a corner, and holds her handkerchief to her eyes.

The driver does not trouble himself to dismount for his new passenger, who carries an immense bouquet of asters, and who says, as she pulls open the door : "Drop me a little this side o' Damons's, Dan."

Dan nods, and Jean leans her head out.

"Do you know where the Bounce place is, in Pineland?" she asks of the driver.

"The Red Farm, she means," volunteers the new passenger, in a loud tone.

"Yes ; should think I did," returned the driver.

"We wish to go there," says Jean.

"Wall," responds the driver.

"What a perfect Chesterfield," whispers Ruth.

The use of the strap now becomes evident as the new comer seats herself in front of the girls and leans back against it.

"How stupid we were," says Jean, "and how dusty it is!"

"The idea of the Bounce being so afraid she would be overrun with gentlemen applicants! How many gentlemen would pass through this ordeal every time they wished to go to town?"

"They wouldn't go to town," says Jean. "Evidently, we shall be as secluded as any one could possibly wish. I begin to feel already as if I were falling into a Rip Van Winkle sleep."


At this juncture the new passenger, who wears spectacles, turns around and gazes over them fixedly at Ruth.

"Was you formerly Miss Green?" she asks deliberately.

"Not that I remember," replies Miss Exeter, growing scarlet with suppressed laughter, and Jean, in order to draw attention from her friend, joins in the conversation.

"Are you sure that the Bounce Farm and the Red Farm are the same?" she inquires politely.

"Of course, I be;" and the spectacles are



turned upon Jean: "I mistrust you're answerin' the advertisement?"

"Yes, we are," smiles Miss Ivory.

"You don't say so!" exclaims the other. "Well now, I hope you'll like it, for Hopeful's sake. I've just been visitin' her sister that lives to the Centre. She married my husband's brother, and it was the wust day's work she ever done in her life."

"Is the mistress of Red Farm married?" asks Jean.

"Married? Hopeful, married?" and the eyes behind the spectacles close up tight as their stout owner laughs until the stage shakes. "No, she ain't married. You won't see no men folks there, except Jabe, and he's a kind of a innocent. He does the chores, you know."

Jean considers it the part of wisdom to obtain further information from headquarters; so no more words are exchanged on the hot, dusty drive, which is of about an hour's duration; then the old stage enters an opening in a high stone wall, and, after a drive of several minutes, draws up before the entrance of a rambling, delightfully old-fashioned, red farm-house.

Their sister passenger has already been left "this

side of Damons's," and the two girls dismount. Jean makes arrangements with the driver to take them back to Pineland in a half an hour, then knocks at the farm-house door.

"Please think of another hour's ride in that stage, Jean," says Ruth, in dismay.

"Yes, we must think twice before we decide on this plan; but is n't it a pleasant old homestead—so cool and green, after the dusty road? Why does n't Miss Bounce make her appearance?" and Jean knocks again with all her force.

Almost immediately the door is opened and Hopeful Bounce stands confessed—a tall, very thin woman, with a long neck, which is displayed from jaw bone to collar bone by the cut of her dress. Her hair is done in a tight nub, except two short locks which form a curl on either side of her much wrinkled face. Her mouth, which, from being pursed up tightly almost every hour in the twenty-four, has a gathered-in, wrinkled appearance, relaxes slightly at sight of her visitors.

"This is Miss Bounce, I presume," says Jean. "We have called in answer to your advertisement."

"Yes; walk right in," says the spinster; then,

suddenly interrupting herself: "What's that!" she exclaims, catching sight of the stage and its driver.

"We came up in the stage, of course," replies Jean, "and I told the driver we should return in half an hour. Evidently, he considers this a pretty spot to wait in."

But Jean's delightful manner is without effect upon pre-occupied Miss Bounce, whose eagle eye is upon the unconscious Dan, stretched at full length on her lawn.

"You'd better send him off," she says sharply. "I'll git you to the train."

So Jean goes and pays the driver, who disappointedly gathers himself together, and, climbing to his seat, takes up the reins and goes.

"He's a worthless critter," asserts the hostess. "Walk in, ladies," and the friends follow her to the darkened best parlor, the stifled air of which is almost suffocating, this July day.

"Take us right where you were sitting, Miss Bounce. Do not let us detain you from your work," says Jean.

"Oh, I was n't doin' nothin' pertikeler. Things can wait."

"But it is so dark and close in here," says Jean, abruptly.


Miss Bounce looks at her, half in amazement and half in anger; but the preceding hour has made decided inroads on Miss Ivory's patience, and although she can smile upon Miss Bounce in the most winning manner, she is none the less determined to have her own way and be comfortable. "Perhaps you were at your dinner? I did not think of that," she continues. "Let us wait out of doors in the shade, until you have finished."

"No; I was just goin' to have it, Miss ——"

"Ivory," adds Jean, "and this is Miss Exeter. We have come to see what you offer, before making other plans for the Summer."

Miss Bounce takes another look at her visitors, and seems to be well pleased with their appearance, for she says heartily:

"Now, you both lay off your hats and take dinner with me. There ain't no place to the village where you can git a mouthful; so, you may as well, and we can talk things over comfortable. Come up stairs, for I dare say you feel dusty after ridin' in that stage."



At this unexpected hospitality, Jean's conscience smites her for having criticized the air of the best parlor ; and she and Ruth follow their entertainer up stairs to a bed-room, where they proceed to remove their hats.

"You are very kind, Miss Bounce. It would be a great privilege to wash our faces and hands, but we must not put you to further trouble."

"No trouble at all, Miss Avery. If you'll excuse me, I'll go down stairs and be puttin' dinner on the table, and you come down as soon as you're ready."

"Did you ever know any thing like it, Jean?" exclaims Ruth, admiringly, when they are alone. "The idea of her taking us right in, and doing for us—perfect strangers, as we are! I should be ashamed not to engage board after this ; should n't you?"

"Oh, no. This hospitality is only a sort of an addendum to the advertisement. It does n't bind us to any thing. This is a pleasant room. I hope they are all like it."

"So do I. Come down, if you are ready. I'm hungry."

Jean obeys, and the two go down into the dark-

ened parlor, where they have to wait only a minute for their hostess.

"Now, walk right out, please," she says. "You 've come upon me, unexpected, and you 'll have to take me as you find me."

"We are not afraid to do so," responds Jean, as she follows Miss Bounce to the well-spread table ; "and should you have taken your dinner alone, but for us ?"

"Yes ; I live by myself, and sometimes the old house seems so big and lonely, I feel as if I must go 'way and leave it ; but I can't bring my mind to it. That's how I come to think of takin' Summer boarders," explains Miss Bounce, helping her guests diligently.

"We came up in the stage with a friend of yours," says Ruth ; "a stout woman, with spectacles. She asked us if we were coming here to stay."

"I guess that was Aunt Allen — not my aunt, but aunt to the whole village, you know. 'Twas she put it into my head first to take boarders. She was here one day, about a month ago, an' I was tellin' her how big an' empty the old house seems since Jerushy died. Jerushy was my sister, an'

she died, a year ago now, of typhus. I have one other sister, married, an' livin' to Pineland Centre; her husband's a brute an' treats her like one, but she's fool enough to live with him through it all, so I don't see much of her. She knows she can come here an' live, any time she's willin' to come without *him*. My father was a well-to-do man, an' he left enough to keep us three girls; but Jerushy's dead, an' Alice is as good as dead, to me, my only brother was killed in the war, so here I am, alone—an' as I was sayin' Aunt Allen advised me to wear out rather than rust out. She said that day—says she, 'It's a shame to let this great, well-furnished house lie empty. Why don't you fill it this Summer with boarders?' 'Because, I won't cater to no men,' says I. Says she: 'You don't need to, Hopeful. Even if you took children alone, an' took care of 'em, it would be good for you and for them, and plenty of mothers would like to be left free to go to the seashore without 'em!' But I think she was mistaken in that, for no children have offered, and I don't expect none; but, if any young ladies, like you, think they could be comfortable in such a quiet place, I shall be pleased to have 'em."

"We have been thinking strongly of it," says Jean; "the stage ride is the great objection."

"If that's all, you don't need to take that," says Miss Bounce; "you can go direct from Pine-land to Boston, by changing cars, and you shall go home that way this afternoon."

"That would make a difference," returns Jean. "Could you let us have accommodation for five?"

"Five, Jean?" puts in Ruth; "Barbara isn't coming, you know."

"Yes, she is, if her mother will let her," responds the other.

"Yes, I hain't had only one application"—Miss Bounce pronounces it applycation—"from a widow lady and her niece, in Boston. They want one room; then I have four rooms beside, that you can choose from, beside some small rooms that don't hardly count. It's a big house. Would you like to go over it?"

The young ladies reply in the affirmative, and, dinner over, they are shown into each corner of the old place.

"It is just as fascinating as it can be," exclaims Ruth, enthusiastically, peering into the dark recesses of the attic.

“And just as torrid, too, up there, Ruth ; so I beg of you not to investigate further, now. If you will give me the refusal of these rooms for a day or two, Miss Bounce, you shall hear from me as soon as possible.”

“Very well,” replies Miss Bounce ; “and now you have an hour before the train goes. Would you like to sa’nter about the farm, or wait in the house ?”

“Oh, let us ‘sa’nter,’ by all means,” replies Ruth, squeezing Jean’s arm ; “only be sure to call us in time.”

So the girls take their hats and go, while their hostess watches them from the doorway.

“I mistrust that that there lanky one is full o’ the old mischief,” she muses ; “but Miss Avery’s a beauty—got somethin’ on her mind, though ; but who hain’t ? Goodness gracious ! see that tall thing caper !” as Ruth hops and skips, regardless of appearances and the weather. “Well, ’t won’t do her no hurt to get a little more color into her face. I’m sure I wish the other one would hop, too ; but, if I’m any judge o’ human natur’, she ain’t in a hoppin’ mood ;” and Miss Bounce turns back to her kitchen, and proceeds to “do up” the

dinner dishes, being speedily immersed in calculation as to whether or no Mandy Allen would hinder more than she'd help, if engaged to divide the labor at the Red Farm, in the coming press of business.

Meanwhile, Jean and Ruth wander around to the back of the house.

"There's an orchard, Jean. I wish we knew where the pigs are, for of course there are pigs. It's great fun to feed them green apples."

"There are n't any as early as this," says Jean, indifferently.

"What — pigs? or apples? There's a brook, any way. Who'll be the first down the hill?" and Ruth runs down the hillside, oblivious, until she reaches the brook, that Jean has not quickened her movements in the least.

"How tiresome," muses Ruth — not, however, referring to the one-sided race. "What a lovely place this would be, if only Jean were herself, and did not allow that silly little experience to torment her. Jean," she says aloud, as her friend approaches, "those rooms are taken. Is n't this a bewildering little brook?"

"Yes; and judging by that rustic sofa, there

was a time when this cosy little nook, under the hill, was more appreciated."

"Yes, the place must have fallen into sad disuse since Mademoiselle Bounce has been a man-hater," assents Ruth. "Sit down on the sofa in a languidly graceful position, and I will group myself behind you in a pose worthy of—"

"Apollo," suggests Jean.

"Yes, or of Yours Truly."

As Ruth speaks the careless words, she sees her companion's face flush angrily, and hastens to cover her blunder. "What is that thing in the water, Jean? Why, *what* are you doing?" for Jean has fallen on her knees beside the brook.

"Catching a turtle," replies Jean, lifting the struggling little creature out of the water.

"How can you bear to touch it!"

"What cleaner, prettier thing could I touch?" returns Jean, looking at the glossy black shell, dotted with gold, which lies in her hand with no more sign of life than a stone. "I used to play with turtles when I was a child, and I am going to do to this what I sometimes did to those old playmates."

"What is that?"

"Carve the date upon the shell. Who knows how many Summers we may spend here, and how often we may see this very turtle. I know a lady who carved a name and date on a turtle's shell, and who came across the same turtle, alive and well, twenty years afterward."

As she speaks, Jean takes a pen-knife from her pocket and begins to cut the date. Ruth, watching, exclaims :

"O, you goosie ! I thought you were doing it wrong ; you have cut 'July 2d,' and this is July 3d ; but you can change it easily."

"Never mind, let it go," says Jean, carelessly, placing the decorated turtle on the edge of the bank. "Just watch how slowly and cautiously it pokes its head out ; why, this carries me back ten years !"

But the awkward swiftness of the animal (for a tortoise can be swift upon occasion, notwithstanding *Æsop*), as it sprawls and splashes into the water, is entirely lost upon Ruth, who is wondering at the complete possession Jean's sore little experience has taken of her.

"What a pity it had not happened to me," thinks Miss Exeter, as they turn and move up the hillside ;

“so slight a mortification would hardly have power to ruffle me ; much less would it drive me to commemorating the day of its occurrence in tortoise-shell.”

“I hope Miss Bounce has not forgotten us in her afternoon siesta,” she says aloud.

“Siesta ! Perish the thought in connection with our future landlady ; I doubt if she ever sleeps. O, dear ! who are you ?” asks Jean, as a grinning face rises above the stone wall directly in front of the friends.

“I’m Jabe, I am, and you’re to come *direkly* ; she said so ;” the last three words with an emphatic nod which indicates that, with Jabe at least, Miss Bounce’s word is law. Jabe, with his shock of sandy hair, clean gingham shirt, and trowsers tucked into his boots, looks just what Aunt Allen has termed him, “a kind of innocent.”

“Positively, Jean, his teeth are clean,” says the irrepressible Ruth.

“O, aint they, though !” exclaims the youth, mournfully. “It’s *her* fault ; she’s continerly scrubbin’ and makin’ me scrub. She washed ’em for me once, and — wall, sence that I’ve done it myself ;” and Jabe turns to the young ladies with

a twinkle in his little gray eyes that does not accord with the inane grin.

"I suppose she was very thorough," says Ruth.

"I dunno ; mebbe she was ; any way, she most killed me. Air you comin' here to stay ?" he questions, gazing with undisguised admiration at his two companions.

"We have not decided," begins Jean, with dignity, when Ruth interrupts.

"Peradventure we may, Jabe, unless you think Miss Bounce would be too hard upon us."

"Wall, no, I don't think she will ; all you have to do is to brush your teeth, keep your hands clean, not stand on your head, and be on time at meals ; that's what she's most pertikeler about," says Jabe, telling off the requirements upon his fingers, and clinging to his thumb in the hope of thinking of one more ; "and I tell you what—her pancakes are lickin' good."

"Ah ! the table, you think, will suit ?" questions Ruth, gravely.

"Dunno any reason why it shouldn't. One leg come off this Spring, but I tinkered it up till it was good as new. Oh, yes ; the table ——"

"Jabe !" calls Miss Bounce's voice, speedily

followed by her visible shape. "Do you want them ladies to miss the train? I believe in my heart you do. Git around to the barn now, quick!"

The boy obeys to the letter, and soon re-appears with the horse and open wagon, then stands grinning as the three drive off, Miss Bounce holding the reins, and Dolly, the meek old family horse, proving herself no exception to the rule, that all the adjuncts of Red Farm are completely under its mistress's thumb.

On the road to the railway station, Jean and her hostess carry on a conversation, while Ruth sitting alone on the back seat, takes notes of the latter's costume, preparatory to giving a graphic description of it to the other girls. A black silk mantilla covers the spinster's shoulders, and upon her head is a large brown bonnet, while the display of neck is as generous as in her indoor costume.

Jean's equanimity is sorely tried by her appreciation of Ruth's scrutiny, as she sits there, in a silence which is eloquent to her bosom friend.

"There, you see that small brown buildin'? That's the depot," says Miss Hopeful, "and 't ain't no very long walk from my place, although like enough it would seem so to you city folks; but if

any o' you should come out to see the farm, unbeknownst to me, the directions is simple: You only have to walk straight ahead till you come to that big elm we've just passed, then angle to the right" — here Miss Bounce gathers both reins into one hand and gives herself up to gesture — "that'll lead to a short cut; walk till you reach a stone wall; climb over that, and then angle to the left and foller the foot-path; that'll bring you to the creek — some call it a river — and there'll probably be a plank across it, but there are plenty o' plaguy boys to carry it off."

"In that case," says Ruth, "I suppose we should stop, and angle in the stream awhile."

"No, mum; in that case, you'd most likely have to go back an' come around by the road. I got caught that way once myself."

"We shall not come without letting you know beforehand, Miss Bounce," says Jean.

"That'll be the best way; an' now, young ladies, here we are. There's a train due from the city now. I shouldn't be a mite surprised if it brought my other applicants, the widder lady an' her niece. Your train'll be here in three minutes."

Jean and Ruth dismount from the high wagon,

hoping to get a look at the expected strangers—for the “widow lady” and her niece may make a difference in their decision ; but the train from the city being late, the two trains meet at the station, and the young ladies have only an aggravating glimpse of a crape-covered figure descending from the opposite car, and with her a tall gentleman, the sight of whom, albeit brief and unsatisfactory, causes the blood to surge into Jean’s clear, white face, and, receding, to leave it whiter than before.

“How foolish I am,” she thinks. “Has that object of charity not injured me sufficiently, and am I to see him in every chance person I meet? I will overcome this weakness.”

“The heat and general fatigue have tired you,” remarks her friend ; “but I believe it is in a good cause, and that we have a Summer before us which shall be memorable ;” and Ruth’s prophecy is destined to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER V.

RED FARM.

"Farewell, thou busy world!"

"As usual, Miss Ivory is late," remarks Ruth, as, with Mabel and Polly, she sits in the ladies' waiting room of the Boston and Maine depot, on the morning of the start.

The two latter young ladies have determined to try what Ruth has been honest enough to describe as the stupidity, rather than the quiet, of Miss Bounce's homestead.

"If you can amuse yourselves, and like sweet smells, why come," Ruth has said; so here they are, wondering at their own willingness to spare a Summer from their lives, yet drawn by the powerful example of their two leaders, one of whom is so tardy in making her appearance. Hardly, however, have the words left Ruth's lips, when Jean appears, arm in arm with Barbara, whose demure face is greeted with exceeding surprise, and whose quiet happiness shines forth from her gray eyes and sheds quite a new lustre upon the prospect.

“You going, too, Barbara? Why, that makes the plan complete,” says Mabel; while Ruth, as the friends have the waiting room to themselves, gives the new comers an appreciative squeeze apiece, and even Polly Gunther is warmed into sympathy with the “Mousie’s” pleasure.

“I was afraid you were going to be late, Jean,” says Ruth.

“Should you have gone without me, if I had been?”

“No, indeed; I would not be so cruel as to deprive you of the sight of Mab’s and Polly’s faces during the period of their transportation from Pine-land Centre to the Red Farm,” and Ruth and Jean exchange glances which considerably mystify the others of their party.

“I am sorry I left our route to you, Ruth,” says Jean; “I might have known you could not resist making these girls—”

“Unjust, as usual,” interrupts Ruth; “it is my fate to be misunderstood by those I love the best;” then changing her lofty tone, “I found that it was this route or none, if we wished to go to Pineland in the morning, so I decided upon it.”

“And very eagerly, I’m sure,” adds Jean.

"No insinuations. Now, young ladies, there are five minutes before we leap; so do your last looking," says Ruth, solemnly.


"Jean, tell us," asks Mabel, "why does Ruth always speak of Miss Bounce's farm as though it were 'that bourne from which no traveler returns?' We haven't signed papers binding us to stay if we don't like it, and unless Miss Bounce has wild animals running about her door yard, I can not see why it should be a fearful undertaking to go there."

"Perhaps you will see plainer in an hour," says Ruth, with a mischievous smile; "but I see your minds are fully made up."

"And I think you will not regret it," adds Jean.

"I am very sure of one who will not," asserts Barbara, emphatically, as with her four stylishly-dressed companions she enters the car.

To Ruth's well concealed delight, this car may well have been the very one which made the trial trip on the first railroad ever laid out of Boston, so old-fashioned is it, with its large stove in the midst, and its small windows stationed with a total disregard of their relations to the seats; but, somewhat to Ruth's disappointment, all the peculiarities of



their conveyance are taken in good part, and the merry party, albeit very quiet in their conversation and laughter, attract considerable notice from the other passengers.

When their station is called, and the young ladies stand upon the platform, Ruth's fondest hopes are realized, as she sees the incredulous look of horror gather upon Mabel's and Polly's countenances, when the Pineland stage is pointed out to them, and is quite content when she has managed that these two shall occupy the back seat of the conveyance and have the strap buckled across in front of them. Dan, the driver, smiles affably upon Ruth, as he attends to the latter duty.

"Decided to board at the Red Farm, did ye?" he asks, not at all disturbed by the supercilious glance bestowed upon him by Miss Gunther, who sees nothing comical and every thing uncomfortable in the position, but from whose dignity the strap certainly detracts.

"Yes; and I hope you will take us there as quickly as possible," returns Ruth, "for it is growing very warm. Jean, you and Barbara please sit against the strap, and I will ride backward and face you all."

This arrangement is carried out, and the stage starts up the glaring white street.

Barbara laughs her low, little laugh :

"Our class makes a very respectable load, does n't it ? "

"If the stage were half as respectable as the load, it would do very well," remarks Mabel, while Polly preserves an injured silence.

"Polly, there's a train back to Boston in an hour," says Ruth. "We will turn back and leave you, if you say the word."

"Indeed, we will not," says Barbara, pacifically. "We could n't spare Polly at all, and we are going to have such a lovely time."

"Oh, do n't disturb Ruth," remarks Polly ; "this is the best part of the time to her, you know."

Ruth's eyes twinkle, and she sings softly :

"Do you want to know the sweetest girl
That lives in this here place ?
Oh, that's my Polly ; she is so jolly !
God bless her heart and face.'"

"Girls, behave !" orders Jean, imperiously.
"Ruth, the driver seems rather taken with you.
Could n't you induce him to hurry ? I would

promise never to tell Mr. Bergh, if he should whip that white horse just a little. The poor old gray has to pull his companion and the stage too."

As the road leads away from the thickly settled town among green meadows and under arching willows, and the warm air turns sweet with faint odors, the spirits of the Summer boarders rise rapidly.

"By the way, girls, we forgot to tell you the most important fact of all: We met a young man at the Red Farm." As Ruth makes this astounding statement, she watches its effect on her audience. Polly's mood is still too suspicious to admit of her showing any interest; but Mabel is all attention.

"Can it be possible," she says; "but I suppose you are joking, Ruth, and it was some relative of Miss Bounce's."

"No, really."

"Fortunately, Ruth's day is about over," says Jean, "for we have reached our destination, and you will very soon know as much as she does."

As Jean speaks, the jolting stage enters the gap in the stone wall, and ascends the inclined plane which leads to the house.

"How much prettier it is than you said?" exclaims Barbara. "What beautiful elms?"


Even as Barbara speaks, Jean notices that a hammock has been hung between two horse-chestnut trees, and that a lady, lying therein, raises herself cautiously to look at the lumbering vehicle, then sinks down again, while she continues her scrutiny through the meshes of the hammock.

"Is that Miss Bounce?" inquires Mabel, curiously.

"Ruth, please fancy our landlady lolling in a hammock!" exclaims Jean. "That, I imagine, is the widow."

As the stage stops by the piazza, Miss Bounce opens her front door and welcomes the young people—that is, she intends to welcome them, but she only says :

"Good morning. Why did n't you wait till afternoon and come by the other route?"



CHAPTER VI.

THE OTHER APPLICANT.

What a perpetual disappointment is actual society.

— EMERSON.

The young ladies have seen and approved of their rooms, have met the widow and her niece, and have done justice to a bountiful dinner.

“Do you suppose Miss Bounce never intends us to use her parlor?” asks Mrs. Erwin, the widow, of Jean, in her softly complaining voice, as they rise from the table. “Such a stuffy little place as it is, when it might be made really quite airy; but I am so shy I can not make up my mind to take possession.”

“I think we may do as we like here,” replies Jean, in her direct, unsmiling fashion, which forms so great a contrast to the indistinct, babyish utterance of the widow; then she turns to the grim hostess.

“It is more attractive indoors than out, at this hour,” she says; “may we make ourselves quite at home?”

"Yes," returns Miss Bounce, with a kind of resignation. It is a greater change than she has expected, to have the silence of Red Farm broken by gay young voices, and to give these girls freedom to roam through her orderly domains, and the first effect is more bewildering than pleasing to the lone woman.

Jean leads the way into the dungeon of a parlor and opens the windows to the fragrant air.

"Thank you, Miss Ivo'y, you are a real benefactress," murmurs Mrs. Erwin, who, it would seem, has never been able quite to master the letter r.

"There is more breeze stirring to-day than yesterday," remarks Jean, pinning the muslin securely at the sides of the window, to exclude everything but air. Meanwhile, Ruth, Mabel, Polly, Barbara and the stranger, Nettie Dart, have formed a circle near another window, where conversation is kept up briskly.

"I am glad your niece is not shy, Mrs. Erwin," says Jean; "she is as easy with my friends as though she had known them all her life."

The widow makes a little gesture of despair.

“Do not mortify me by referring to it, Miss Ivo’y ; Nettie is so wild.”

Jean looks across at the plain young girl, with her bright eyes and pug nose, and thinking it very delightful to see her enjoying herself so thoroughly, says so.

“Of course it’s ve’y right for Nettie to enjoy herself,” returns the lady, with a sigh ; “the only objection is that she thinks there never is a time when she ought not to enjoy herself. When she has done ve’y wrong, for instance, she never knows what it is to be at all subdued, but is always just as you see her now.”

Jean still thinks that the way she sees her now is very pleasant, and can not help contrasting the bright face of the niece with the sallow countenance, with its large, prominent eyes and incipient wrinkles, opposite her.

“As I was telling my ve’y dear friend, Mr. Dart, the day we came here, it was no small self-denial for me to make up my mind to be buried in this place the most of the Summer, but some one had to take care of Nettie during her vacation, and there seemed to be no one else. Beside, just now it does n’t matter so much, as I should wish to be

quiet at any rate through this season," and Mrs. Erwin touches her sombre dress, while the little act dignifies her affected utterance, to Jean, and awakes the girl's sorrow for that mother whose loss she never mourned in crape. To her amazement, Mrs. Erwin continues, in a business-like tone :

"And another consolation is that this is so good a place to wear out old dresses. It's all ve'y well for those to whom black is becoming, to strain a point and wear it to the ve'y last minute, but it 's different with me ; next Summer I shall not have a single black dress. I know I look badly in black, and am gradually lightening it now. I do n't know as you noticed it, but this ribbon at my neck is lined with lavender ; and although I keep the color hidden now, I shall turn it out, one strand at a time, for I am so shy and sensitive by nature, that unless I get used to seeing myself in tints, I shall not like to put them on before my friends in the city. Nettie, Nettie," continues the widow, raising her voice, "Do not laugh so loud ;" then to Jean, "I can not take her into society, with those gushing ways and that coarse laugh."

"Into society ? that little girl ?" questions Jean, in surprise.

“Why, I don’t know what else to do. Mr. Dart thinks she ought to go to school four years yet ; but she is sixteen years old, and school influences seem to make her worse and worse, and, after all, it is ever so much more necessary that Nettie should understand the figures of a cotillion, than the figures of geometry.”

“Still, I suppose her father is the one to decide,” remarks Jean.

“Her father? Nettie never saw him ; and when her mother married again, she preferred to have her little girl take her second husband’s name ; but my poor sister died soon after her marriage with Mr. Dart. She was so pretty, I do not see how her daughter’s nose ever came to turn up ;” and Mrs. Erwin gazes in sorrowful disapproval at her unconscious niece.

“Then I suppose her step-father defers to you,” begins Jean ; but the widow interrupts:

“Oh, he is not living either. The Mr. Dart I referred to is his son, and a ve’y dear friend of mine. He is father to Nettie, just as I am mother to her—that is, we look after her, between us ;” and a slow, dull color mounts to the speaker’s forehead, while she runs her words together in a still

more infantile manner, and plucks consciously at her onyx necklace.

Jean is greatly bored, and looks longingly at the group formed by her school-mates and their new friend; but escape is not possible at present.

"What, Miss Ivo'y, do you suppose makes Miss Bounce so opposed to gentlemen?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," returns Jean, absently, trying to catch what anecdote Ruth is relating to her audience.

"Do you suppose she would object to our having occasional callers?"

"There is a way of finding out."

"Yes, I know; but I am so shy I do not like to ask her. Won't you ask her, Miss Ivo'y! I can see already that you have so much force."

"But I do not expect callers, Mrs. Erwin; my father may come to see me, and I certainly shall not ask permission to receive him. How absurd! Pardon me, but you speak as though she were a kind of dragon!"

"I am glad if you do not feel that she is; but I had the idea that when we came, we tacitly agreed to her odd notions. What is that, coming up the

drive? It must be the wagon bringing your trunks, and I am *so* glad, for I know you will let me see you unpack, won't you? I am a perfect child about loving to see pretty things."

"But she is a very precocious child about taking patterns, Miss Ivory," speaks Nettie Dart, who, with her companions, has drawn near to watch the approach of the express-wagon; "so, if you have any thing particularly original, I advise you to keep it out of sight."

Mrs. Erwin's slow color rises again:

"If I begin begging pardon for my niece's odious behavior, it will take up so much of my time, that I should like to ask all of you young ladies in advance, to be lenient, hoping that your society will make a change for the better in her."

"You know I always said, Aunt Inez, that example is better than precept," replies the girl, smilingly; "now that I am to see how a true lady should behave, there is no telling what I may become."

It is impossible to say whether or no Mrs. Erwin is prepared to reply to this outrageous speech, for Miss Bounce opens the door suddenly, but stops in the act of announcing the arrival of


the baggage, in sheer dismay at the scene in her sacred, best parlor.

For a moment she says nothing, merely looking at the open windows, the muslin curtains loosened from their gimp confines, the chairs pulled out from the wall in social confusion, and, most heinous of all, a narrow strip of sunlight slanting across the carpet; then she takes a long breath and exclaims: "Sure!"

"I will attend to the expressman, Miss Bounce," says Jean, divining her errand and her dismay, and the whole party leave the room, leaving Miss Hopeful to gaze about her upon the ruins.

"Red ain't noways likely to fade, that's one comfort," she soliloquizes, "but this Summer'll take a clean ten years' wear off'n this carpet. Why, under the sun, be you takin' Summer boarders, Hopeful Bounce?" and as she asks this question she stoops to lift a crocheted tidy from the floor; "and this is only the first day, too; well, well, they do know how to make themselves to home."

"It must be real pleasure to you, Miss Bounce, to have this bright, pretty room in use again," says Jean, entering quietly. "Shut up parlors get such



a close, disagreeable feeling ; still, we musn't spoil your carpet. My man is coming out to-morrow,"——

"No gentlemen," murmurs Miss Bounce, whom Jean's address has bewildered slightly.

"Well Sam is no gentleman," says Jean, smiling in spite of herself ; "he is coming out to bring two saddle horses for me, and I shall send by him for a linen covering for this carpet.

"Well, I can't gainsay you're very kind, Miss Avery," returns Hopeful, with a perceptible lightening of the careworn look. "I was just thinkin' I'd ben kind o' ventur'some. I had rather a wear-in' day, yisterday, with Mis' Erwin ; she an' the little girl fit, an' she got histericky ; so to-day, when I come in an' seen the carpet goin', too, it gin me a diskerridged turn. Not but what I'd ha' stiffened up in a minute more, anyway. It would be the first time, if I should turn back now, after puttin' my hand to the plow."

"Jean," says Mabel, softly, suddenly entering the room, "do come and open your trunk ; Mrs. Erwin is just hovering over it and devouring it with her eyes. The other girls are unpacking, but she only gives an occasional glance at them. It is my

belief that she can see right through the lid of your trunk, and knows that your clothes are handsomer than ours."

"She will have an opportunity, then, to use her second-sight," returns Jean, "for I shall not unpack before her. Tell the girls to hurry and get through so we can go out to the orchard; it is beautiful there."

This message Mabel calls from the foot of the stairs.

"But Miss Ivo'y can not go without her shade hat, and that I suppose is in her trunk," remarks Mrs. Erwin, leaning over the banisters.

"Perhaps Miss Bounce will lend me hers," says Jean, with a questioning look at the mistress of the house.

"I don't use a hat, but you're more'n welcome to my shaker," returns Miss Bounce, shortly.

Jean's ideas of what a shaker may be are rather misty, but she accepts with thanks, and soon the straw bonnet with its gingham cape is leading the way to the orchard, side by side with Ruth's ornamental head gear.

Directly behind the two friends walk Mabel, Nettie and Barbara, while the widow follows with

Polly Gunther, whose airy manner has convinced Mrs. Erwin that she is socially eligible.

"Let us all go to the village to-morrow morning, and buy shakers like Jean's," suggests Ruth ; "they protect the neck so nicely, and I'm sure mine will burn so red that no one can tell where my hair commences, if I don't cover it up. Would n't it be a lark for us all to file into the store together !"

"Almost too exciting," murmurs Polly satirically. "Ruth can find amusement in such uninteresting places and things."

"And people, too ?" asks Mrs. Erwin.

Polly shakes her head. "I don't know, she is a strange girl ; why, do you know, coming up in the stage, she insisted that there was a young gentleman here," finishes Miss Gunther, in whose mind this pleasing fancy has lingered.

"She could not have been in earnest ; there is the only young gentleman on the place," returns Mrs. Erwin, indicating Jabe, who is at a little distance feeding the pigs, who are grunting and squealing in their sty under the barn.

The boy turns and regards the party, and sends a nod and grin to Ruth, who nods back

again. Miss Gunther views the pantomime with scorn.

"Miss Ivo'y has a ve'y peculiar manner, I think," pursues Mrs. Erwin.

"Heiresses are privileged to have unusual manners," replies Polly; "it is only we girls who have nothing who must beware how we behave."

"Then this *is* the Miss Ivo'y," says the other, in a relieved tone; "I thought it must be, for the name is not a common one. I have heard of her. How happy she ought to be with all that money! She is coming out next Winter, they say. Do tell me, if it is n't impertinent to ask, what brought you young ladies to this out-of-the-way place?"

"We graduated together, this season," explains Polly, with rather a disagreeable smile — "graduated from every thing but Miss Ivory's rule; and she and Ruth, deciding that we should want considerable strength next Winter, made up their minds to come here and start what they call a strength-bottling company."

"A ve'y good idea, Miss Gunther," asserts the widow, with great interest; "you will not know how good, until you get fairly launched into society, and see what work it is. I shall be going back

myself next Winter, in a quiet way," continues the lady, eagerly. "Receptions and lunch parties, in lavenders and grays, you know — but go on. I interrupted you."

"I was only going to say that I hardly know just why Mabel and I came, unless it was in a spirit of toadying to Jean."

Mrs. Erwin is not nearly so surprised at this speech as is Polly at having made it, and the latter continues hurriedly :

"As for Barbara, of course she was only too thankful to go any where, at Jean's expense ; so, here she is, and has no idea of looking a gift horse in the mouth."

Mrs. Erwin is greedy in her curiosity, and takes no note of Miss Gunther's vanished affectation, or coarse jealousy.

"Heiresses always have their hangers-on, you know," she says. "I thought from Miss Waite's appearance that she was not of your world," and her speech is balm to Polly, whom nothing in her world afflicts to such an extent, as Jean's tender regard for Barbara.

"Yes, Barbara is very poor, I believe. We call her Mousie, sometimes, she is so small and

silent. Church - Mousie would be more appropriate."

The widow throws back her head and laughs at this witticism. She is in a pleasant mood and could laugh at any thing. She has come to this lonely spot to oblige her very dear friend, to take care of her niece, and to wear out her old dresses ; and behold, for companions she has several young ladies, among whom she feels younger than ever, and, more than all, here is the opportunity to cultivate an intimacy with Miss Ivory, whose acquaintance will be so desirable in the coming Winter.

"I'm afraid you are ve'y sarcastic, Miss Gunther," she says, as they join the others at the gap in the orchard wall.

"There, is n't that a charming hill-side ?" asks Ruth.

"Yes ; but are we going into that long grass ?" asks Mrs. Erwin, timorously. "It looks so suggestive of snakes."

"It does to me, too, Aunt Inez," assents Nettie, jumping through the gap into the orchard ; "and, beside, we are going down to a brook that has turtles in it, and you are afraid of turtles, you know. I would n't come."

“Are you afraid of turtles, too, Miss Ivo’y?” asks the widow, passing over her niece’s advice as unconsciously as possible. “They are such ugly creatures!”

“No, indeed; Miss Ivory likes them; she said so,” interposes Nettie.

“Nettie, your rudeness to me I can bear; but be good enough to let Miss Ivo’y give her own replies,” speaks Mrs. Erwin, and her rebuke would be dignified were it not for the vanishing consonant which alters Jean’s name to that of a vine, and robs the other words correspondingly.

“I think I can ensure your safety against reptiles, Mrs. Erwin,” says Jean, stiffly. “Will you not come with us?” and the widow smilingly assents, slipping her little arm through Jean’s round, firm one, much against the latter young lady’s will.

“Ruth,” she says to her friend, that evening, the last thing before retiring, “there is a worse objection than the stage-ride, to spending a Summer at the Red Farm.”

“You mean the widow and her niece.”

“Yes; the one is flippant and shallow; the

other, flippant and heartless. We are thrown with them, and they are disposed to be very intimate. Now, Emerson says ——"

"Jean, for mercy's sake, don't!" exclaims Ruth, in dismay, her hair-brush suspended in air and her hair glinting in the lamplight, as she turns suddenly upon her friend: "That very thought passed through my mind to-day. I thought: 'What shall we all do if Jean insists upon being Emersonian?' Now, inclination and Emerson would both have you treat those two people like ——"

"Ruth, Emerson——"

"Yes, I know all about it, appearing what you are, and being what you appear, and the grandeur of sincerity. I love to read it almost as well as you do, and feel as exalted as any thing when I get through, but the plain facts are these: If when you can not avoid being with Mrs. Erwin, you treat her as you honestly feel, either we or she will have to go back to Boston in a week. Mark my words!"

"Then all is, you must constitute yourself a watch to see that she does not try me too far, and to warn me in time; for I am sure I shall say or

do something definitely disagreeable to one of that couple before many days," and speaking firmly, Jean gathers up some trifles of her belonging, and bidding her friend good night, crosses the hall to her own room.

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CHAPTER VII.

AN UNEXPECTED RENCONTRE.

"But fortune, like some others of her sex,
Delights in tantalizing and tormenting."

A week slips away at the farm, pleasantly but for the uncomfortable relations between Mrs. Erwin and her niece, a young girl who seems to reserve her disagreeable side solely for this aunt, whose attitude toward her is a curious mixture of fear and patronizing rebuke.

To Barbara Waite the days bring unclouded pleasure, for Jean's care and thought for her are untiring.

Sam comes, bringing the horses, and makes a second trip with the five hammocks and the linen covering for the parlor carpet.

"She might have sent for a horse apiece for us, as well as not," grumbles Polly Gunther, in Mrs. Erwin's sympathetic ear, as they alone swing in the hammocks under the horse-chestnuts. "I do believe she ordered all these hammocks only that

there might always be sure to be one at Barbara's disposal."

"She does seem more like a mother to that girl than any thing else," assents the widow ; "it is a strange whim."

"Especially, as Barbara is actually older than Jean, for all her white little face and dependent ways," adds Polly.

"I do dislike to see a woman try to appear younger than she really is," asserts Mrs. Erwin.

" 'Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as others see us !' "

sings Ruth, emerging from the house and coming toward the hammocks ; and Polly can not repress a smile, although she is very chary of smiles since coming to the country, having never relinquished for long at a time the injured look which settled upon her countenance in the Pineland stage, while her friends expect every day to hear from her lips the determination to leave the uncongenial precincts of Red Farm ; but she avows no such intention as yet, the fact being that the atmosphere in which Jean lives, moves and has her being, is full of attraction to Miss Gunther, and the only change needed to make the wilderness of the isolated farm

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blossom as the rose, is that the heiress should transfer her delicate attentions and loving care from the insignificant future school-mistress to the equally needy and far more charming Polly Gunther.

"I never saw a more indefatigable strength-bottler than you are, Polly," observes Ruth; "I haven't seen you use a particle of strength since you arrived."

"If I knew any pleasant way of using my strength I should be only too happy," replies Polly.

"Why, there are plenty of ways. I have ordered two sets of croquet, which will arrive this afternoon, and that will give us one more diversion."

"I wonder you didn't order your saddle horse instead. Horse-back riding is the one thing that would be pleasant here."

"I haven't one, my dear. I haven't been at home enough to make it an object, and my father would no more allow me to use a strange horse, as Jean does, than he would——" and Ruth finishes with a gesture."

"Why, I supposed those beautiful creatures of Miss Ivo's were old pets, by the way she treats them," says Mrs. Erwin.

"No, indeed," responds Ruth, "but Jean has only to say, 'Father, please get me so and so,' and Mr. Ivory claps his hat on the back of his head, flings his overcoat over his arm, and rushes down town to buy so and so, and no questions asked."

"What a desirable father to have," groans Miss Gunther.

"What a desirable daughter, you had better say," remarks Ruth; "it is all Mr. Ivory's reliance on his daughter's admirable character and common sense that causes the state of things," but even as Ruth speaks, she is obliged to smile at the remembrance of the recent occasion when Jean's common sense had not stood her in good stead; for, try as she may, Ruth can not regard that misdirected charity in the light of a tragedy.

"Ruth," says Polly, "you are freckling dreadfully all across your nose and the upper part of your cheeks."

"I know it," returns Ruth, drawing a small mirror from her pocket and investigating her countenance with a frown; "just imagine with what gratitude I recall the italics at the foot of Miss Bounce's advertisement, '*No gentlemen.*'"

"You are fortunate, if you can recall it with

gratitude," says the widow, mournfully, "but if you had a ve'y dear friend that you were anxious to see, you might not be so grateful."

"It is too bad," assents Polly, who has evidently been let into all the particulars concerning Mrs. Erwin's dear friend.

"I didn't get my shaker any too soon," muses Ruth, aloud, still inspecting the fine, white complexion that accompanies hair like hers. "By the way, you know I had no one but Miss Bounce to go with me to the village this morning ; so, as I could not overcome the store-keeper with a number of beautiful young women, I overcame him with the number of shakers I bought. They are lying in a pyramid in the upper hall, so any one that fears for her complexion may help herself."

"Thanks, you are ve'y thoughtful," returns Mrs. Erwin, "but I'm afraid it would be hardly dignified for me to wear such a thing."

"Why, certainly it would," says Ruth, innocently ; "women ever so much older than you, wear them in the country."

"I mean on account of my mourning, of course," returns Mrs. Erwin, highly offended,

while Polly gathers the edges of the hammock over her face and begins to swing.

To Ruth's relief, a diversion is formed at this juncture by the arrival of her friends.

"This grove, with the hammocks, looks very pretty," says Jean, "but I have come to see if I can tempt you away from it, Mrs. Erwin. Would you enjoy riding with Barbara, in my place, this afternoon?"

"Thank you, Miss Ivo'y, you are more than kind; I wish I could accept your offer, but I do not ride."

"She is shy, you know," explains Nettie, "and that makes the horse shy, and——"

"We will have another session for wit, if you please, Miss Dart," interrupts Jean, coldly; "time is flying, and it is cool enough to-day to ride earlier than usual; will you go, Polly? Mabel went yesterday."

"O, yes, if Mabel, Nettie, Ruth and Mrs. Erwin do not care for it, and you are sure I am not robbing any one, I am so *very* fond of riding that I will go."

"Jean," says Barbara, in a low voice, "please let some one go in my place to-day; I am being a

real monopolist, and I should enjoy lying in the hammock and resting instead."

"Resting?" asks Jean, quickly, "are you tired to-day, Barbara?"

"O, no, not tired," replies the girl, raising her delicate face to Jean's with still greater entreaty; "I am only lazy, and willing to lie down a great deal, and waste a great deal of time."

"No, I think you must take your ride," says Jean, after a minute's thought. "Don't let her go too far, Polly; then, when you have brought her back, perhaps Nettie will take her place, and you can go farther."

"No, indeed; I'll take no favor from you!" exclaims Nettie, hotly.

"Very well," assents Jean, simply, with an expression of face which Ruth decides is strictly Emersonian.

"And I have my designs on you, Jean," says Miss Exeter; "you and I must go and explore."

"With all my heart."

"And we must dress for it. I'll not take you in that skim-milk colored organdy."

"Of course not. Polly, Barbara knows where it is; I think it will fit you very well," and course,"

so saying, Jean links her arm in Ruth's, and they proceed around the house to the kitchen, where sits a fat, good natured personage, whom the girls remember at once as "Aunt Allen."

"Yes, indeed, I recognize 'em," she says, rising as Miss Bounce introduces her boarders, "and I'm glad for all hands that you decided to come."

Then, while Ruth completely wins the old lady's heart, by an unaffected interest in herself and her daughter Mandy, who is Miss Bounce's help, Jean takes her hostess aside.

"Miss Bounce, will you see that Miss Waite lies down, when she returns from her horseback ride?"

"Certain, I will. Don't you fret, Miss Avery!" this admonition, more as a piece of general advice than in relation to the present question.

"Why should I fret?" asks Jean, with elaborate nonchalance.

"H'm!" ejaculates Miss Hopeful.

"What do you mean by that?" asks the girl, sharply.

"Not a thing, Miss Avery. I hain't any call to mean any thing. I'll remind Miss Waite, the minute she comes in, that she'd best lay down."

"Tell her that is the way to make riding beneficial — to rest after it."

"I will, Miss Avery."

Fifteen minutes afterward, two country girls emerge from the farm-house, and their best friends would not recognize in the gingham-clad figures, wearing shaker bonnets, Jean Ivory and Ruth Exeter.

"Now, I think our best way will be to climb through the bars at the end of that lane, and then 'angle' to the right or left, just whichever looks most promising," remarks the latter. "This is the very first time since we have been here, that I have had you all to myself, Jean, and I am going to enjoy it to the utmost. What a good thing it is that I am not of a jealous temperament. I think I should detest Barbara, if I were."

"What a good thing that you have a slight share of common sense, you mean, Ruth."

They slip easily through the bars, taking off the long bonnets for the purpose, and soon enter a narrow path, which leads through pine woods.

"Oh, is it not good to be here!" exclaims Ruth, dropping her light tone and taking deep breaths of the fragrant air.

“Good for all, but Barbara,” replies Jean, shortly.

“Can it be possible that you are worrying about Barbara?” asks Ruth in great surprise.

“Yes. Am I foolish?” and the troubled dark eyes look wistfully into Ruth’s, as the two friends walk slowly in the shade of the pines, the ugly bonnets swinging from their hands.

“At school, we were all accustomed to the fact that Barbara was pale, and never minded the circles under her eyes, or the uncomfortable cough, just because she ignored them; but when I called at her house to get her mother’s permission that I should bring her here, a veil seemed to fall from my sight, and I knew that the poor little mother who has denied herself every thing to give Barbara her education, was troubled and frightened about her. If you could have seen, Ruth, how eagerly Mrs. Waite accepted my invitation, and the strange look in her eyes whenever she glanced at B., you would not wonder that I carry her on my heart all the time.”

“And to some purpose,” adds Ruth, heartily.
“This life is the very thing for her.”

“But does it seem to be? Is n’t she in the same

condition as when we first came?" asks Jean, woefully. "I would have a doctor examine her, only that I fear frightening her."

"Do not think of such a thing. You and Nature will be the best doctors. Of course, there is no change yet. It is unreasonable to expect it."

"Is it?" asks Jean, as eagerly as though Ruth were an oracle.

"Why, of course," returns the other, with increasing confidence, "this freedom from confinement and care, and easy exercise, are bound to make such a change in little B., that you will take her home to her mother in triumph, in a few weeks."

"Oh, Ruth, what a good friend you are!" exclaims Jean, in the relief of her comforted heart, and although she says no more, the light in her handsome face and the ring of content in her voice reward her companion richly.

"Here is some 'patridge bush'—Miss Hopeful said it was," says Ruth, stooping and picking the tenderest of the shining green leaves, and handing half the bunch to Jean. "Now I think our get-up is complete. Put on your shaker and go to chew-

.

ing 'partridge bush,' and you will be a real village maiden."

Jean looks down at her plaid gingham dress, and laughs as she puts on the bonnet.

"As you are guide, Ruth, perhaps you 'll tell me what we are to do with this stone wall ahead of us."

"Climb it, I fear, Miss Ivory. No ; here is a gap. I find they do have gaps, as a rule. My suspicion is that we are on the very path which Miss Bounce described as a short cut to the 'depott'; and if so, we shall come to the stream. Oh, what a beautiful word — stream ! I am so thirsty. Yes, there it is ! How it glimmers through the trees ! Jean, we are two children in a fairy story, and we are coming to an enchanted stream, of which we have been commanded not to drink ; but overpowered by thirst, we disobey and do drink, and a dreadful voice speaks, and — and something awful happens to us."

Nothing but the gurgling of the narrow river breaks the silence, as laughingly the two friends run to the bank, and falling to their knees, scoop up the water in their hands.

Hardly has it touched their lips, when a man's voice speaks sharply :

"Be careful. You 'll frighten the fish!"

Jean starts, and Ruth gives a little scream, and pushing back her bonnet until it rests on the edge of her hair, looks in the direction of the voice.

It has proceeded from very near them, where sits a man, a gentleman, evidently, wearing a broad hat, and fishing.

At the sight of two women, he has given a decided start, then an involuntary smile, as he pictured the absurdity of discovering women he knew, and especially the particular woman of whom he is thinking, in such a garb as those before him. Then came the splash of hands in the water, and his quick, selfish warning.

His voice thrills through Jean, bringing with it vaguely painful associations, which she places quickly enough, as she stands upright, motionless with surprise, and thankful for the deep bonnet which renders her face invisible.

"Pardon me, if I startled you," says the gentleman, easily, addressing Ruth, and wondering at her pretty, fair complexion, "but it is not to be wondered at, if she always shades it with that affair," he remarks, mentally, as he scrutinizes the shaker hanging by its strings about the girl's neck.

Ruth returns his scrutiny, at first in alarm, then, seeing that the stranger is not a tramp, indignantly.

"Of course you startled us," she replies, with spirit, while Jean whispers anxiously,

"Come away ; do not speak to him."

"Of course we're going, Jean ; but not back to the house," returns Ruth, *sotto voce*.

"My only excuse is that I had had my first bite just before you made your appearance, and my excitement was at its height."

As the gentleman speaks, he moves slowly up and down the bank, his eyes on his line.

"I believe your fishing is considered good," he continues, conversationally, "I wish I could find it so."

Ruth's eyes sparkle. "He takes us for natives," she thinks, and regardless of the peremptory pulls which Jean gives her sleeve, she places her arms a-kimbo.

"The city folks find it first rate, as a usual thing," she replies. "This is a trout stream, you know ; maybe you 're tryin' for somethin' else."

"I 'm fishing for trout, but I 'll take any thing with fins," replies the stranger. "It is n't the best

season for fishing, I know, but I have heard some wonderful stories about this little river, and have had it on my mind for some time to try it ; so night before last I came up from the city, and I think I may say hereafter that I have tried it."

"You mustn't be too easy discouraged," responds Ruth ; then, yielding to the imperative pulls at her sleeve,

"Do you know whether we can get across the creek?"

"Yes, just this side of the waterfall," replies the gentleman, still without taking a second glance at the young ladies.

"In which direction, please?" asks Ruth, of necessity, but feeling that she is betraying her strangeness.

At this, the gentleman does turn and glance for a moment at the bright looking young woman with the red hair ; then stooping and fixing the rod firmly beneath a rock,

"I will show you," he says.

Ruth and Jean follow the other's easy movements, but coming to the spot where the plank ought to be, no plank is there. For a minute their guide looks puzzled.

"I certainly crossed on a plank at this point a few hours ago," he says ; "it has been moved, but it can not be far off," and turning suddenly to search for the missing board, the gentleman unintentionally takes a fair look into Jean's face, and pauses a moment too much surprised to move.

It is an unpleasant expression which he meets in the depths of the shaker bonnet. The eyes are black with excitement and repugnance, while the face contradicts their fire in its cold pride and contempt. It is only a moment, and he has recovered himself and moved on ; but all his searching proves vain.

"I am sorry to say that unless the plank has sailed over the waterfall, it is lost on the opposite bank. It is quite possible, however, for you both to cross on the stepping stones, if you will accept my assistance."

Ruth looks at her new acquaintance in surprise. What can have caused the change in his address, the sudden access of deference in his tones !

"It is getting late, Ruth," speaks Jean, in her low voice, "we can go farther another day ; let us go back to the house."

"Don't be faint hearted, Jean, or if you are, let

us be 'faint, yet pursuing,' for I am anxious to go home by the road," says Ruth, and putting her hand in that of the fisherman, she steps daintily and safely across, on the rocks which lie half out of the whirling water.

Jean, following, simply ignores the offered hand, and, looking neither to the right nor to the left, commences the journey in safety, the stalwart figure of the unknown managing to keep abreast of her, by all sorts of awkward jumps and strides.

Half way across, her foot slips, and she is preserved from a complete fall by a firm grasp on her arm, and reaches the other shore with one very wet foot and a heart full of uncharitableness.

"Thank you very much," says Ruth, with her jerky, little company-manner, having decided that the fisherman's change of tone is owing to the discovery that Jean and herself are of his own caste.

He raises his hat, and retraces his steps across the stones, while the girls continue their walk.

"An adventure!" exclaims Ruth, "an adventure in these charmingly lonely woods! What a strange effect, to come upon that handsome man so suddenly, and have him snap at us—really snap at us! Imagine the difference, had we met in the



drawing-room — long gloves and silk ; button-hole bouquet and broadcloth. ‘Ah, Miss Exeter ;’ ‘m, ‘Mr. ——’ — I wonder what his name is ; don’t you, Jean ?”

“No, indeed, I do not. I never felt less curiosity ;” and Jean brushes the gingham sleeve that has suffered the stranger’s touch.

“And you never had worse manners either, my dear. There is such a thing as being too reserved and proud with strangers.”

“Then you have nothing to reproach yourself with,” observes Jean.

“No ; and I’m very glad of it. I feel refreshed after exchanging a few words with a gentleman.”

“What makes you think he is one ?”

“‘Think he is one ?’” repeats Ruth ; “I know he is one, and so do you.”

“On the contrary, I know he is not one,” returns Jean, slowly and quietly.

“Well, you are the most critical girl I ever knew. What did he do to offend ? When you were so silly and prudish, and would n’t allow him to help you, did he not behave well ? And, oh, you do not know how comical you looked, balancing along alone ; even he could not help smiling

when you slipped ;" and Ruth laughs contagiously, supremely unconscious of the storm brewing near her.

"Oh ! he laughed, did he ?" asks Jean, speaking still more quietly.

"Of course ! How could he help it ? This is the way you went," and Ruth swings her arms in exaggerated imitation. "These suits make us look so ridiculous, you know. I'm sorry he did not have good luck fishing, for if he had, he might have stayed here weeks, and who knows but what Miss Bounce might relent, and take him. What an acquisition ! Can you not hear Mrs. Erwin talk baby-talk to him, and see her roll up those big eyes ? I'll warrant she would forget her ve'y dear friend in less than a week's contemplation of those dark eyes and that clean, fair face. Why, Jean, what is the matter ?" for Jean has sat down on a grassy knoll and covering her already shaded face with her hands, shakes all over without making a sound.

"Look up, for pity's sake, Jean. You could n't have minded what I said about your crossing on the stones ? Our friend might have been biting his moustache when I thought he was smiling. Now,

I think of it, I'm sure he was ; but of course the situation seemed laughable to me, for in the only glimpse I caught of your face, you looked so stern and angry, and he was jumping around so ! Do look up, Jean."

Jean looks up — her face so grave, she can not have been laughing ! her eyes so dry, she can not have been crying.

"Appearing ridiculous before gentlemen, is getting to be my *rôle*," she says, calmly, "and one can get used to any thing ;" which trite remark changes the current of Ruth's thoughts, and gives her a startling idea.

"Jean," she exclaims, "that man is never—I mean —" she hesitates — something in the expression of her friend's face warning her from the forbidden subject. "Perhaps you have met him before?"

"Never," says Jean, intentionally misconstruing her friend's meaning ; "but as I am not as overcome by his personal advantages as you, perhaps you will change the subject, and let us go home as quick as we can, for, according to Miss Bounce, we have a long walk before us."

"Yes ; for city folks," adds good-natured Ruth,

her suspicions allayed ; and Jean's whims not being numerous, she can afford to respect them, and so converses on such safe subjects as pedestrianism and pedometers, until, emerging into the road at the landmark of the elm which Miss Bounce has pointed out to them, the two friends meet Jabe in the open wagon, on his way home from the village.

"You may call yourselves lucky," he remarks, cheerfully, bringing Dolly to a stand-still, while the young ladies get into the wagon. "It's a long walk up the road."

"I'm afraid you're lazy, Jabe," says Ruth, as the horse starts. "Miss Bounce does n't call it a long walk."

"Wa-al, she's made o' steel springs, so it stands to reason she should n't mind it. Still, I did n't go for to make you ride, if you're hankerin' to walk ;" and the ever-grinning Jabe brings Dolly to another stop.

"Jabe, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," says Ruth, standing up and touching the patient horse with the whip, leaning over the front seat to accomplish the feat.

"My orders is not to whip the hoss," says Jabe, as they start.

"Very likely," returns Ruth; "but the discipline here is not nearly severe enough. Why, what do you think! I just now found a man in the woods, over there, poaching on Miss Bounce's preserves."

"Poachin'? That's stealin', ain't it?"

"Yes."

"Git aout," returns Jabe, highly entertained. "She don't keep no preserves down there. Ye' can't fool me."

Ruth laughs, and Jean says in a low tone:

"I would not speak of your stranger, at home, Ruth."

"Trust me for that," says Ruth, knowingly. "Do you think I wish to sustain a fire of cross-questioning from Mrs. Erwin and Polly? They would scour the country for the poor, lone fisherman. No; I will give him time to get safely away. And speaking of Mrs. Erwin, Jean, you certainly deserve credit for the way you have treated the widow and her niece. I have watched you."

"There is no credit due me at all. Mrs. Erwin is very inoffensive, as a rule, and it is easy to ignore that ill-bred child. Poor little thing! I

wonder she does not begin to perceive how badly she behaves. I long to see Barbara," continues Jean, as they draw near the house, "and know how she is feeling."

On entering the shaded parlor, the friends find Barbara lying on the horse-hair sofa, and made comfortable by pillows.

"No wonder you are surprised to see me here," she says, smilingly. "I assure you, Jean, Miss Bounce is not nearly so grim as she seems. Why, she brought these pillows of her own accord, and insisted upon my lying here, because it is cooler than up-stairs."

"Miss Bounce is a good, sincere woman, and you are the young lady to bring the best out of her, Miss Waite," responds Jean, laying her hand for a moment on Barbara's forehead, while the more exuberant Ruth stoops and kisses her.

"We have been having a beautiful walk in the woods, Mousie, searching for natural curiosities."

"That is good. Did you find any?"

"One very handsome animalcule — only one — and that we did not bring home."

"Ruth is talking nonsense — the only thing she is capable of talking. We had a nice walk, though.

You must go with us, some time, and see how pleasant the woods are. How was your ride?"

"Better than usual, Jean. I never had any thing do me so much good. I feel better, to-day, than I have for a year."

"You blessed little Barbara!" exclaims Jean, in a low voice; then, turning away; "I am going up stairs to change my dress for tea."

"Let me come with you," begins Barbara, rising.

"No; I forbid it," returns Jean, with an imperative gesture. "Lie where you are, until the bell rings, Mousie."

So Barbara obeys, and Jean goes up to her room, relieved, for the first time, from that sickening and exaggerated dread for her gentle little school friend; and, were it not for the startling *rencontre* of to-day, her cup of happiness would be brimming over.

Entering her room, she moves to the window and opens the blinds—shades, there are none—and proceeds to make her toilet.

There is a sleepy twitter of birds outside, in the old elm, whose spreading branches come so near to intruding within her window. The hoarse click, rather than ring, of the cow-bells, and the unceas-

ing chorus of frogs, tree-toads and crickets, sound nearer and louder than usual, in the quiet of the coming evening. Suddenly, while Jean is devoting breathless care to the number of hairs which shall be allowed to fall over her forehead, a long-drawn sigh startles her. She looks about, but sees no one.

"Who is there?" she exclaims.

For answer, Nettie Dart comes slowly out of the closet, the door of which has been standing ajar.

"Oh, dear! now I've frightened you, and that makes it worse than ever," says the girl, ruefully.

Jean does not answer, but turns back to the glass, with no sign of consciousness that the room has another occupant.

Nettie looks at her a minute, wistfully, with heightened color, then moving slowly to the door, pauses with her hand upon the handle.

"You do not think I intended to frighten you?" she says in a strangely humble tone.

"I really do not know why you were in my closet, else; but you have done no harm — as yet."

The younger girl is hardly so dull as not to understand the cold significance of Jean's words. Still, she does not go, but stands, with an irresolute, pained, expression, which, it is easy to see, is



new to the bright, plain face ; then, in what she strives to make a voice as haughty as Miss Ivory's own, she says, drawing herself up :

"I came to apologize to you ; but you make it very difficult for me."

"Your errand is a strange one, and strangely conducted, then. You have nothing to apologize to me for, and — and I am in a great hurry, Miss Nettie."

Jean's voice is like a wet blanket to Nettie's effort at indignation. Its unfeigned indifference hurts the impulsive girl far more than coldness, and Jean is unpleasantly surprised to see her sink into a chair and burst into a flood of tears.

She stands, regarding the sobbing girl, with but one feeling uppermost — that of being intensely bored ; then, as there seems no sign of the storm's clearing, she moves to the closet, and, taking a dress therefrom, proceeds with her toilet in perfect silence.

"What an — what an iceberg you are !" sobs Nettie, disconsolately.

Jean takes a pin from her mouth, and pins a lace tie at her throat, while silence reigns, except for the slowly lessening sobs.

"I suppose you think I am doing all this for effect?" comes again in stifled accents from behind Nettie's handkerchief.

"I think you will attract considerable attention at the supper table," observes Jean, composedly. "I advise you to bathe your face, and use some Florida water. You are quite welcome to make yourself at home here, if you choose, and your aunt is in your room."


"There! I am glad you said aunt," says the girl, brokenly, "else I might not have had courage to say what I came to say. Oh, Miss Ivory! if you only knew how I adore you, you would n't be so perfectly hateful."

Jean smiles involuntarily at this paradox, and moving to the little painted washstand, pours some water into the basin.

"If you are through crying," she says, "come and follow my advice."

"I would be glad to follow your advice in more than that," says Nettie, raising her reddened eyes to Jean's calm, cool face. "I am sorry to have offended you so often, since you came to the Red Farm."

Jean begins to comprehend the reason of this



visit. The plain face, which she found so pleasing upon the first day of seeing it, looks more pleasing to her now, in its disfigurement, than it has done at any time since, although it is hard to repress another smile at sight of the look of utter woe which is upturned to her. She stands for a moment and bites her lips, irresolute in her turn, then says in a lighter tone :

“Bathe your face, Miss Nettie, and think no more about having offended me. I am not angry with you.”

But this reply does not satisfy her companion.

“I wish you were,” says the girl, moving to the stand and dashing the water into her face ; then, as she takes the towel : “I wish you cared enough about me to be angry ; but that is just it. Do you suppose that I do not see every day that you only think of me when you are obliged to, and then only to realize that I am a nuisance. If you will promise only to *look* at me as you do at the others, without that—oh, what is it?—bored, disgusted look in your eyes, I will honestly try not to be impertinent and tormenting ;” and Nettie, having dried her eyes, draws nearer to the object of her unreciprocated affection, who has

no faith in reform based upon sentiment, and who is severe in proportion to her youth and inexperience.

"I am glad if you begin to perceive how badly you treat your aunt," she returns coolly.

"Oh, Aunt Inez!" says Nettie, smiling, and in a voice which plainly shows that her aunt has no part whatever in her new resolve; "I was not thinking of her."


"So I supposed," says Jean; "that is just the trouble. There is the tea-bell, Miss Nettie. Let us go down."

"No, Miss Ivory; please, not just yet. It is for your sake and for your approval, that I wish to be different," returns Nettie, speaking rapidly as she intercepts Jean's movement toward the door.

"For whose ever sake you change, it would certainly be the best thing you could do," observes the older girl, thoroughly wearied.

"Well, I wish you would tell me how you would like me to behave, so you will like me."

"If you really need to be shown that your rudeness is rudeness, you are in an unfortunate state," returns Jean, and her clear, level tones are very humiliating to her companion. "You are



hardly a child, but are quite old enough to know when you hurt another. As I said, if you need me, or any one, to specify the trouble, you are beyond hope."

"But Aunt Inez is such a foo — I mean," hesitates Nettie, "it is such a temptation to say improper things to her, I can hardly resist. You do not know how hard it is, Miss Ivory."

"No, I do not. You must be the judge of that. Let me pass, please."

And Nettie does let her pass, quite discouraged with the effort to soften, or conciliate, the young woman for whom she has conceived an almost morbid admiration. Having a straightforward, honest nature herself, Nettie Dart has grown into a keen appreciation of her aunt's weaknesses, and has let her contempt for them overrule and crush out respect; and she has made Jean, with her wholesome, unaffected strength of character, a kind of idol, to invest with all possible and impossible virtues, and to adore in secret, as younger girls sometimes do older ones, especially when, as in this case, theirs is a hopeless affection.

"I wish I did n't care a fig what she thought of me," muses the girl, when she is left alone. "I'm

sure I ought not to, but I do, and I will make her notice me in some way. She shall either approve of me, or be angry with me — I will *make* her !” and with a final drying of the troublesome eyes, she also goes down the old-fashioned stairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

TYRANT FASHION.

Her cheek was pale, and thinner than should be, for one so young.—LOCKSLEY HALL.

“What is this — a Dorcas society?” asks Ruth, a few mornings after the events of the last chapter, as she comes upon her sister boarders, who are seated, sewing, on the west piazza. “I have been up in my room, reading a novel. The heroine is a lovely character. She wears faded muslin dresses, and freshens them with a bright ribbon — that style of heroine always does — and devotes her whole life to the care of a consumptive friend who dies in the last chapter, after having lived just long enough to separate the heroine from her lover forever.”

“Is that what makes you look so wild?” asks Jean. “Barbara,” in parenthesis, “let Mrs. Erwin finish that cap. You have pinned it in such a way that any one could put it together.”

Barbara smiles, and shakes her head as the

widow makes a feeble effort to follow out Jean's hint.

"Do I look wild?" asks Ruth, putting both hands to her somewhat dishevelled head; "then it is because I cried over that book; and suddenly remembering that I was making a complete dunce of myself, discovered that the house was still as death, except for Mandy, who was making a bed in the next room, and singing:

" 'On' something 'mountain, there did dwell
A' something 'youth, I knew him well.'

"Strange, I never can distinguish the name of the mountain, or what kind of youth lived there; but it is not Mandy's fault, for she practices the song six hours a day;" and Ruth seats herself on the piazza step, beside Jean who is, like herself, idle. "Do tell me, what is the use of writing books to make one cry? I hold that a man or woman who publishes a book, has a great responsibility. He or she has no right to make people miserable, even if it is only temporary misery. The better the writer, the greater the responsibility;" and Ruth bumps her head gently against the post by which she is sitting.

Jean's eyes are upon Barbara's earnest, flushed

face, as she bends over the breakfast-cap, and she does not answer her friend.

“Oh, Mousie ! look, please, and see if I ran a splinter into my finger ;” and with a little exclamation, Jean kneels on the step and leans one handsome hand in Barbara’s lap, as, with the other, she takes the work and tosses it to Mrs. Erwin.

The widow looks up in displeasure from her task of pleating some lace, then lays the cap down beside her, with the evident intention of returning it to the willing assistant, when the slender hands so busy with Jean’s shall be free again. Even her uncritical eyes can not but be struck by the contrast between the thin, fair face, and the oval beauty so near it, whose rich darkness enhances the other’s delicacy.

“I can not see a thing, Jean,” says Barbara, inspecting a pink-tipped finger with a frown. “How strange that you should have felt a pain !”

“And yet I did, B.,” returns Jean, slowly, but with her eyes fixed on her friend’s face, and not on the hypocritical hand. “Never mind ; it’s gone now ;” and as Jean resumes her seat, the vigilant Mrs. Erwin returns the cap to Barbara ; for she found out, many days ago, that the plainly

dressed girl has a positive genius for dress-making, and, given pretty materials, can rival a French woman in skill.

"No ; Barbara is not going to sew any more. She is going to smooth my head," says Jean, striving to speak lightly, as she again sends the muslin flying through the air, wishing at the same time that its texture were not so ethereal, and that it might bowl the persistent widow off the piazza.

"Miss Ivory, I fully intend to pay Miss Waite for all that she does for me," remarks that personage, bridling.

Jean turns suddenly, and the injured look fades as the little widow positively quails before the flashing eyes bent upon her ; but Jean controls herself. It would be bad for Barbara to be excited.

"Miss Waite is not a seamstress, Mrs. Erwin. You forget !" she says, turning back.

"Oh, yes ; just let me finish the cap it will not take ten minutes," says Barbara, making a movement toward it.

"I'll do it, Aunt Inez," says Nettie. "I am in no hurry for this fancy-work, and I think I can do it very well."

As she speaks, the girl looks straight past her

aunt, at the back of Jean's head, with its slightly-waved coil of black hair. She receives the looked-for reward. Jean turns and gives her a kind, approving look that makes her heart beat.

"That is the way to please her," she thinks, "through Miss Waite ;" and, strangely, Nettie is not jealous of Miss Waite ; so she takes up the work with a happy face.

"I might do much worse than be a seamstress," says Barbara, perceiving that her friend is displeased for her. "It is nice to have that to fall back upon, in case teaching fails."

"Nice !" Jean shivers at the thought. How short a time it would take for the frail body to wear out in that — for Barbara — perilous employment !

"So you shall, Mousie ! only I bespeak all your time in advance. Shall I not outshine my neighbors in those days ?" she exclaims, clapping her hands, enthusiastically. "Ruth, excuse me for not answering your question about books. Do n't you know people enjoy being made miserable ? enjoy crying over heart-rending stories ?"

"I'm sure I do," asserts Mrs. Erwin, her equanimity restored ; "but I think it takes a sensitive

nature to sympathize with and weep over another's woes. I should never suspect you of doing such a thing, Miss Exeter."

"I am glad you would n't," returns Ruth. "It is not my idea of pleasure, to be harrowed up during two-thirds of a book, and reduced to such a condition by the time I reach the last chapters, that I can not attempt to put my handkerchief in my pocket at all, but just *sozzle* through them in a feeble sort of way, and when I lay the book down, finished, be ashamed to see my own face in the glass;" and Ruth yawns in secret; then, leaning back and looking up at the sky: "Who suggested coming to Pineland, girls? Can you remember?" she asks.

"Oho, Ruth! you have come to it, have you?" laughs Mabel. "Why don't you make a break-fast-cap? You have no idea how soothing it is."

"Because it would never be on straight, if I had one. I can not even wear a bonnet, and suppose I never shall. It would always be on the side. Imagine how I shall look — one mass of wrinkles, with a full set of porcelain teeth, and wearing a jaunty hat trimmed with cock feathers, or a wing."

"Ladies!" comes Miss Bounce's voice from the

window which opens out upon the piazza ; “did ever you eat a boiled dinner? Really, I’m at my wit’s end to know what to git for you, next.”

“I’m afraid you take too much trouble for us, Miss Bounce,” says Jean.

“Law, no ; if I could only make Miss Waite eat, the trouble would n’t amount to nothin’.”

Barbara looks up at the wrinkled face—grown more relaxed during the last two weeks, instead of more drawn—sure proof that her experiment is working well for both sides :

“I think you can not have noticed me lately, Miss Bounce. I have been very hungry the last few days, after my rides.”

“So? Well, you ain’t what one would call a glutton, yet!” and Miss Hopeful smiles a grim smile.

“If we could only import a few gentlemen, what a lovely *fête champêtre* we could manage here,” remarks Mrs. Erwin, with a sigh, which indicates to the initiated her anxiety to see her very dear friend.

“Why have n’t we thought of it before?” exclaims Ruth, with sudden interest. “We ought to have a picnic.”

"Of course, we ought," echoes Jean. "Is there any place that you can recommend for the purpose, Miss Bounce."

"Huh!" ejaculates that person, half laughing, half grunting, and wholly scornfully. "I suppose you can put some victuals in a basket, an' go out in the orchard, an' eat 'em by the brook, as well as any wheres — full as many spiders an' grand'ther long-legs there, as any where else."

"Oh, no; not so near home; that would not do at all," smiles Jean.

"There is the river where we were the other day," suggests Ruth, and her friend's smile vanishes. "We went down through the woods, Miss Bounce, and took the short cut to the village."

"You did? Then you seen the river. They say there's wonderful fishin' in that river; but I suppose you would not care for that?"

"Why, yes, I think we should; don't you, Jean?" and Ruth's eyes dance mischievously. "I have recently taken quite an interest in fishing."

"O how Mr. Dart would enjoy it, if he could only be here," sighs Mrs. Erwin, "he is passionately fond of fishing, is n't he Nettie?"



"Yes, ma'am," replies her exemplary niece, twisting some lilac and black ribbons around the breakfast cap.

Miss Bounce feels that this is reference to her limited hospitality.

"There ain't no reason why Miss Nettie's pa should n't ——"

"He is not her father," interrupts the widow, snappishly.

"Well, your friend, whoever he is ——"

"My ve'y dear friend," interposes the other.

"Why he should n't stay to the village, and fish till he's sick of it," continues Miss Bounce. "Here, Jabe! Jabe!" she calls, as the boy is crossing the lawn. He hears, and comes shambling along in his lazy way.

"Was there ever such a fellow to dawdle as you be," is her greeting. "Did n't Aunt Allen say there was a gentleman stayin' to her place, fishin'?"

"He do n't do no fishin' there," grins Jabe.

"No impidence. Ain't there a gentleman stayin' there? That's what I want to know."

"He ain't, so to say, stayin' there," says Jabe, pushing his hat over until it hangs on one ear, the

better to scratch his head, "he's off an' onin', as it were, so to speak."

"Dear me, don't he act like a nat'ral born one?" asks Hopeful, despairingly. "What I keep him for, I don't know. You see, Mis' Erwin, Aunt Allen will take a gentleman, just as lieve as not."

"He don't stay there all the time yer know," explains Jabe, "he's off to Boston one day, an' back the next, back to Boston the next day, then liker'n not he'll stay two days, next time he comes. I tell yer he caught a whackin' big trout day before yisterday, I seen it yisterday mornin'."

Ruth pulls Jean's dress lightly, but no answering consciousness betokens that her friend takes any interest in the fact that the fisherman's luck turned after they left him; for there is no doubt in Ruth's mind, that the good-looking unknown and Jabe's fisherman are one and the same.

"Tell us a good place to picnic, Jabe," she says.

"I can take yer to a fust-rate place on the bank o' the creek."

"If Miss Bounce agrees, you shall do so tomorrow," says Jean.

"Jean, this is my picnic, and you are not going to take it out of my hands. For once I am going

to conduct something all myself," says Ruth, loftily.

"So do, Miss Ex'ter," says Miss Bounce ; "I guess Miss Avery 'll let you, an' welcome. Of all the things I do n't covet to manage, a picnic's the worst. Is the place far, Jabe?"

"A pretty good piece."

"Then you'd better take one of the farm hosses with Dolly, an' hitch up the hay wagon."

"Oh, lovely!" exclaims Mabel.

"Probably never saw a spring," grumbles Polly; but no one minds her croaking.

"Can't we help you with the lunch?" asks Jean of her hostess.

"Law, no. You could n't do nothin'," replies Hopeful. "You make your plans, an' tell Jabe when you'll want to start. You're welcome to him for the whole day," she adds in a tone which indicates that she considers the gift a small one.

"Is Jabe busy to-day, Miss Bounce?" asks Jean, rising and advancing to the window where her landlady stands.

"Busy!" with a contemptuous snort; "not likely."

"Could he drive me to Pineland Centre this afternoon?"

Were Mrs. Ivory present to see her daughter make this request, her heart would sink within her, at the ominous lighting of Jean's eyes. Jean only looks so bright, according to her step-mother, when she is intending to throw away a lot of money.

"Had n't you better go hossback? You'll go in half the time," says blunt Miss Bounce.

"I know; but it is too far, and too warm a ride for Miss Waite, and some one must go with her; still, if it is not quite convenient, or it would be too tiresome for Dolly ——"

"Fiddlesticks! Do Dolly good," interrupts Miss Hopeful. "Here, Jabe," as the youth is turning away. "What time, Miss Avery?"

"Three o'clock."

Miss Bounce raises her voice again:

"Jabe, have Dolly hitched to the carryall, and to the door at three. Do n't forget, now."

Jabe nods and moves away.

"You'd roast alive goin' so far in the open wagon, the sun's so hot, an' the buggy's wore out, so I guess you'll be most comfortable in the carryall."

"Thank you, it will be very nice, and no doubt Miss Exeter will like to go with me."

"I suppose you want to do some shoppin'? 'm " asks Miss Bounce, ending with a little assenting sound which she often makes at the close of a question that she fears may sound over-curious. "If you be, would you mind doin' an errand for me?"

"I should be very glad to," returns Jean, cordially.

"Seems if I did n't rightly know myself what I wanted, neither," adds Miss Bounce, with some embarrassment, "if you an' Miss Ex'ter would kind o' gi' me some advice, I should be beholden to ye."

"Why certainly. Ruth, come here a minute, please."

Ruth obeys, and the young ladies follow their hostess to her own room.

"Take seats, please," she begins. "I never did pretend to have no taste for dress, but I never intend to let down the respectability o' the Bounce name, through the meanness of a bonnet," and so saying, the spinster marches with great firmness to her closet, and taking down a huge bandbox, places it on the floor, and kneels down beside it.


Jean and Ruth also kneel down beside the box, and Miss Bounce puts on a pair of spectacles, to see the clearer through the dilemma in which fashion has placed her.

She lays hands on the cover of the box, then pauses a moment, and looks over her spectacles at her companions.

"I dunno as you remember my brown bonnet, I hain't ben out much sence you come," she says anxiously.

"Yes we do ; I do perfectly," returns Ruth, and Jean is humbly thankful for the blank serenity of her friend's face.

"Well, I've wore that for two years, and Aunt Allen, she's kind o' new-fangled in her ideas anyway ; why, Mandy, she knows just as much about the latest styles, an' all that, as anybody in Boston, but I won't listen to nothin' from her. Aunt Allen says to me, 'twas one Monday, I was washin', an' she ought to ha' ben, that's the only thing I've got against Aunt Allen, she won't wash till Tuesday. I was washin' an' she set there by me, an' says she, 'Hopeful, I'm older than you be, an' I know what's fit for you better'n you do yourself. *You need a new bunnet!*' I dunno when I've had such



a start, I most forgot to blue the clothes. I did n't like not to say nothin', for fear she should think she'd offended me, an' she had n't a mite; Aunt Allen could n't offend nobody, so I just said, 'I want to know?' Says she, 'yes; your bunnet,' she always says bunnet, she ain't a very correct speaker, 'your bunnet has troubled me for many a month past,' says she. I interrupted her then, says I, 'seems to me your eyes had better be aimed higher up in meetin' than the top o' my head.' But she wan't a speck put out. 'That may be,' says she, 'but say what you will, you've got somethin' on your conscience as well as me in this matter. You set right in front o' me, I can't help seein' you, an' your bunnet is beginnin' to interrupt my devotions, Hopeful Bounce.' "

As Miss Bounce reaches this point, she sinks back in her kneeling posture, as far as practicable, and looks from Jean to Ruth, and back again.

"Why, what be you smilin' at? I tell you I felt bad enough, she spoke so earnest. She did n't gi'me time to speak, but went right on, gettin' more an' more excited like. 'I've bore it Hopeful,' says she, 'to see Winter melt into Summer, and Summer freeze into Winter two or three times

over, an' be disapinted each time in the hope that you'd git somethin' else to wear on your head ; but yisterday, when it took me from Mr. Foster's firstly to his sixthly, to find out whether the thing on top o' that brown bunnet was a ostridge feather or a piece o' seaweed, it made me feel bad, Hopeful, real bad ! ' "

Jean's and Ruth's shouts of laughter change the spinster's look from anxious solemnity, to one of curiosity, while she gazes at her young companions with a sympathetic half smile on her thin lips.

"I dunno but what ther' is a comical side to it," she says, "but it throwed such a weight o' responsibility onto me when she took me so to task, that I felt like anythin' but laughin'; it's a dreadful thing to have to git a new bonnet."

"I never thought so," returns Jean with laughing eyes.

"Well, there's everythin' in bein' used to it, an' I ain't used to it, there's the difference you see. Now, three years ago, I think 'twas three," repeats Miss Hopeful, thoughtfully, "I got me a Summer bonnet, an' never wore it only one season, 'cause somehow it did n't suit me."

Here she uncovers the huge box, and takes

therefrom a black straw bonnet, which she holds up for inspection with so anxious a look into the girls' faces, that its hideousness fails to cause a smile.

Ruth takes it a moment, touches the petals of its large yellow roses with dainty fingers, while her lips twitch. Then, just the right comment upon it failing to present itself, she passes it to Jean, in silence.

"I was lookin' at it yisterday, an' I've ben takin' pertikeler notice o' your things, sence you come, an' somehow or 'nother, that bonnet hain't got the right look," and Miss Bounce seats herself in a chair, and leans her chin in her hand.

"'Tain't a mite like your's, Miss Avery."

This naive assertion sends Ruth to the window to look out on the stretch of green grass, and the hammock-hung chestnut grove.

"An' I was goin' to ask you ef you would n't git some trimmin' for it, that it would n't be too great a tax on me to wear, yet that would be soothin' to Aunt Allen. It's dreadful to be so stylish as she is."

A memory comes to Jean of Aunt Allen, fat, fair, and far upon the shady side of fifty, clad in

highly peculiar raiment ; but she does not smile, she balances the black and yellow horror on one hand, and looks seriously into Miss Bounce's face.

"Just wrap this up in paper for me and I'll take charge of it and promise you shall be satisfied with the trimming."

"Satisfied ? Of course I shall," says Miss Hopeful, jumping up briskly to obey ; "although I'm afraid it will be too much trouble. Perhaps I ought to go with you an' attend to it myself."

"O, no, no indeed," replies Jean, with suspicious eagerness, "I should really enjoy doing it myself."

"Very well, then, an' thank you again an' again," says the other, in a relieved tone, as she pins up the parcel. "Don't stent yourself, now ; I can afford to go as high as a dollar an' a half for trimmin'."

CHAPTER IX.

A CHARITABLE ERRAND.

And the name of the fiend was — *Drink*.

The pleasant little circle is gathered about Miss Bounce's tea table, before the old carryall turns into the gap in the stone wall, bringing Jean and Ruth home from Pineland Centre.

That their errands, whatever they were, have been successful, is evident from their good spirits. The little danger lamps still burn in Jean's eyes, as she greets Barbara with a smile, at once brilliant and tender.

"Who rode with you to-day, B.?" she asks, removing her hat and seating herself at the table. "Miss Nettie? That's good. Now let me unload, I have my pocket full of little parcels. Mrs. Erwin, I hunted faithfully for your crewels, but every where I asked for them they looked at me as though I were a harmless sort of lunatic, but there's your chenille, and Ruth, you have Mabel's lace, Polly there's your ribbon, and Barbara, there is a

white tie that I saw hanging up, marked Barbara Waite. Of course I took it and brought it home."

"Who ever heard you talk so fast, Jean!" exclaims Barbara, tying her gift about her neck, where it lies a soft little mass of white embroidery under her delicate chin. "What discriminating clerks they must have at Pineland Centre, to know just what suits me best," and although Barbara understands so well just how Jean likes to be taken, her face shows plainly enough that she has a true woman's love of finery, and enjoys her gift for its own sake as well as the giver's.

"Talk so fast," repeats Jean, "you would not wonder at me if you knew how silent I have had to be in the carriage. Ruth and Jabe have conversed without ceasing. Miss Bounce, Miss Exeter will spoil ——"

Jean gets so far, when she sees in Hopeful's face an anxious look which recalls to her mind the absorbing interest which her hostess has had in her visit to the town. Indeed, Miss Bounce has been watching with eager interest the tissue paper parcels as Jean and Ruth have drawn them forth, one by one.

At Miss Ivory's first announcement that her

pocket was full of bundles, Miss Bounce laid down her knife.

“There !” she thought, “if she hain’t brought home my flowers in her pocket, an’ liker’n not set on ’em all the way ;” but as each parcel proves to be something other than her “trimmin’,” her heart sinks lower yet, as the shifted responsibility seems likely to come home to roost on her own angular shoulders after all.

Jean reads her disappointment and interrupts herself suddenly :

“I attended to your errand, too, Miss Bounce, but we will wait and discuss so important a matter after tea.”

“Thank you,” returns the lady of the house, rather dejectedly. Then, partly to conceal her disappointment, she continues : “What did you think of the town, young ladies? I s’pose you drove through the best part.”

“Yes,” responds Ruth, “and saw ever so many pretty homes. But, Polly, what am I thinking of, not to tell you that we met Dan.”

“Dan who ?” asks Polly, pausing in the act of lifting a strawberry to her lips.

“Have you forgotten so soon, fair and fickle

one?" asks Ruth, shaking her head in tender reproach as she gazes at Polly: "Why, the Jehu of the Pineland stage, of course. He remembers how you enjoyed your drive with him, and is ready at any time to repeat the treat."

"Ugh! you silly thing!" exclaims Miss Gunther, in disgust.

"Indeed, Ruth bowed to him as affably as possible," remarks Jean, smiling at the remembrance.

"Of course, I did!" exclaims Ruth, impressively.

"Who guided our exploring feet
Into his stage on Centre street,
And strapped us safely to the seat?
'T was Dan!

"and do you suppose I am above recognizing our benefactor? But for him, perhaps we should not be eating fresh strawberries this minute at the Red Farm. Jean, you're nearest them; please give me one spoonful more."

It is an unusually informal supper-hour — Jean and Ruth being late — and one by one the company leave the table, Jean being the last to rise.

"Come up stairs with me, Miss Bounce," she says, "and I will tell you what I did about the bonnet."

As she passes through the hall, she sees Mrs. Erwin endeavoring to peer into a loosely pinned bundle lying on the hall table.

Jean takes the bundle in silence, and goes up stairs, followed by Miss Hopeful.

"Dear me! what an odd girl she is," thinks Mrs. Erwin, uncomfortably. "How she can make one feel, without saying a word; and I was n't doing any thing to be ashamed of either. I would n't be as disagreeable as she is, for all the world!" and Mrs. Erwin moves to the open door, from which she sees Barbara and Ruth walking up and down beneath the trees.

"What do you suppose that generous-hearted Jean went to the Centre for?" Ruth is asking, as Mrs. Erwin appears in the doorway.

The widow strains her ears, having a large bump of curiosity, and although she can not distinguish all of what is being said, a word here and there, as Ruth in her interest raises her voice, enables her to gather something of the truth, and she enjoys her meager and not very interesting knowledge, merely because the conversation is not intended for her ears.

"She went to see Miss Bounce's sister," Ruth

goes on, "a sister whom we learned of on our first visit here. Miss Bounce will have nothing to do with her, because she will not leave her husband, who drinks."

"Poor thing!" puts in Barbara, sympathetically.

"Of course any one whom money can help, sticks fast in Jean's mind until she has given some of hers to the needy one; so, there we went to-day. Oh, such a doleful place! One of these square, white, nondescript houses that grow right out of the sidewalk, and have no curtains at the windows! We went in, and there we found this woman, looking comically like Miss Bounce, although one lives here in plenty, and the other has so hard a life, with five children and a husband who is ten times more care than a child. He was not there, and I was grateful for that, for I did not know as I should ever smile again, as it was. If the house looked forlorn on the outside, it was enough worse within. There was n't a decent chair to sit down in, and, really, the children looked hungry."

"How did you know what to say?" questions Barbara.

“I? I never should have said any thing. I should have been standing in the middle of Mrs. Allen’s floor, to this moment, unless she had put me out. I felt ashamed of being there at all, you know, she looked so uncompromising and so sincerely sorry to see us. But Jean would have fascinated a stone, she looked so bright and modest, and the way she said ‘Is this Mrs. Allen?’ disarmed the poor woman ; then she lifted one of the children into her lap, and held it while she talked. As soon as Mrs. Allen heard we were living here, she shook her head and looked as hard as a rock. ‘Then I know what your errand is,’ she said, ‘and Hopeful ought to know by this time that I won’t listen to it.’ Jean explained to her that Miss Bounce knew nothing of our coming, but that Aunt Allen had directed us. Of course, I can not tell you all that was said ; but Jean was lovely — lovelier than ever.”

“Yes,” assents Barbara, eagerly.

“The misery of the whole situation was so obvious, that it would only have made matters worse to appear to ignore it ; so Jean talked right out. Mrs. Allen looked hard as the rock of Gibraltar through much of it ; but suddenly she broke down

and cried, and all five of the children kept her company. It was a dreadful noise, but it was very pathetic. These people are living on a respectable street, instead of in an alley, so their neighbors were letting them starve — really starve, Barbara," Ruth continues, with trembling lips. "I could not stand it. I rushed out of the house, and laughed at Jabe in a crazy sort of way, leaving Jean to make them happy, temporarily, at any rate."

"Jabe knew, of course, whom you had been to see?"


"Not at all; and his ignorance shows how neglected this unfortunate woman has been by her sister. I think Miss Bounce is just as hard-hearted as she can be, although Jean says her conduct proceeds merely from ignorance of the truth."

"I imagine Jean does more good than harm with her money," observes Barbara, thoughtfully.

"Imagine so? Of course, she does."

"I am sure I should n't, in her place," returns Barbara, meekly, seating herself in one of the chairs which Jean has had scattered about under the trees.

"There, now, I have tired you out with my quick walking?" says Ruth, contritely.



"No, I am not tired, only rather breathless. You know my breath is so provokingly short!"

"For pity's sake, never let Jean hear you say that!"

Scarcely has the thoughtless exclamation passed her lips, than Ruth would give worlds to recall it, and her face glows as she feels the troubled gray eyes fixed upon her.

"Yes, I know Jean worries about me," says Barbara, "and I know, too, that her unflagging kindness is not in vain. I am growing stronger every day, and it makes me so happy, Ruth, for my mother. If I should—if anything should happen to me before I had repaid her for all she has suffered to give me my education, how sad it would be."

Ruth listens in amazement. Barbara's voice is so entirely removed from fear, or self-pity, Ruth suddenly realizes that what is a new and fearful thought to herself and Jean, is an old and well-considered one to the invalid, and that all Jean's delicate little subterfuges are quite thrown away.

"I take the beautiful gift of Jean's love and care with gratitude," continues Barbara, "and every advantage she gives me I use to the utmost

and if any thing can save me from the fate which has always been dreaded for me, I shall escape. My poor father ! There was no one to care for and save him. Mother could only love him and try to keep her heart from breaking ; but there, Ruthie, I am being selfish. What a day this has been for you, poor child ! Do n't cry, Ruth ; do n't, dear."

"I should — have cried — coming home," sobs Ruth, sinking into a chair by Barbara, "if it had n't been that Jabe and the carryall were so comical."

She cries for a minute, then wipes her eyes and continues :

"You know Miss Bounce said the buggy was 'wore out,' and I'm sure if she considers the carryall in good order, I shouldn't like to see the buggy."

Ruth is eagerly anxious to get away from sad subjects, and Barbara joins in the laugh as her friend graphically describes the once-respectable old conveyance.

"It is delightful for Jean, more than delightful, to go about playing fairy god-mother with so powerful a wand," says Barbara, when they are quiet again.

"And few people with money do the kind of things she does," returns Ruth. "A person needs

to have not a particle of lazy blood in her veins, to do good in Jean's way."

"Still, it is more from an impulsive love of it, than from a sense of duty, that she is charitable," says Barbara, somewhat timidly.

"What of that! Why should you depreciate her on that account?" asks Ruth, sharply.

"I am not depreciating her," is the quiet answer. "I was only thinking. I am afraid, in spite of all her tact and power and sweetness, the darling's generosity will get her into trouble sometime. She will be likely to get some hard knocks while gaining experience."

Ruth smiles at some thought suggested by these words.

"You're a clear-sighted, wise little B.," she says, ashamed of her quick temper, "and let me tell you something, Barbara," she continues, with a significant nod, "the rash mortal is to be pitied who attempts to console Queen Jean for any of those same knocks."

Meanwhile, up stairs in Jean's room, important business is being transacted. Jean has led Miss Bounce thither, and closed the door.

Miss Hopeful looks anxiously at the bundle in Miss Ivory's hand.

"I see you brought the bonnet back," she says, "jest as you took it. Did you find you could n't decide on a trimmin'? —'m."

Jean takes the pins out one by one, and unfolds the paper, displaying a black chip bonnet trimmed with black lace and violets.

"Laws-ee, ain't that pretty?" ejaculates Miss Hopeful, with a lighting up of her grim face, as she puts on her spectacles.

"Very, I think; let me try it on you," returns Jean, suiting the action to the word.

"Well, if that ain't complete, what is it?" questions Miss Bounce of her reflection in the mirror. "That sets down on my head and feels as comfortable as an old shoe."

Jean ties the black lace strings, and congratulates herself on her selection, while her companion can hardly find words for her relief and satisfaction.

"Why, 'tain't no more like that bonnet you took away than chalk's like cheese," observes Miss Bounce when finally she holds her acquisition in her hand again.

Jean smiles and wonders what man, woman or child, is the richer for the yellow-trimmed head-gear which she threw out of the old carryall a few hours ago, upon entering Pineland Centre.

"You know they do over straws like yours," she says, half smiling.

Miss Bounce receives the information in good faith.

"I want to know? I should n't have supposed they could do it so quick, but time rolls on, as the old sayin' is, an' I can't keep up with it; but I thank you more'n I can say, for the trouble you've took."

"And you think now that you will not interrupt Aunt Allen's devotions?" asks Jean.

"I'm not so sure Miss Avery," replies Miss Bounce, nodding her head significantly. "I may stir another feelin' in her by settin' in front of her with this on, the human heart's deceitful an' desperately wicked you know, and now," dropping from a high moral tone to one of business, "I know you laid out more'n a dollar an' a half on this, pressin' over an' all, but I ain't a mite sorry. I'd pay three dollars for it any time."

"Very well, if you are satisfied I am glad.

You can pay me when you like, there is no hurry."

"You did give as much as three dollars for it, then?"

"Yes."

"Well, I ain't a mite sorry, I don't know but what I should git as dressy as Aunt Allen if I had you to pick out my things for me," and away goes Miss Bounce to her supper dishes.

CHAPTER X.

THE PICNIC.

“In Summer when the days were long.”

“Are you sure you’ll not change your mind, and come with us, Miss Bounce?”

The hay wagon stands at the door, and the picnickers are ready. Jean stands on the piazza, buttoning her gloves, as she asks the question.

Miss Bounce in the door-way, shakes her head.

“I’m glad enough to do my part to help you go,” she returns, “if you’ll gi’ me the privilege o’ stayin’ at home. Jabe, have you got them baskets fixed so the sun won’t get at ’em?” And not content with an assurance of their safety, she goes out to the wagon, and climbing upon the hub of the wheel, sees their safe disposition for herself, while her gray curls blow in the warm Summer wind.

“Jabe, do get a chair,” says Mrs. Erwin complainingly, “what a dreadful thing to get into! There’s my waterproof, I never went to a picnic but it rained.”

"I am afraid you are sacrificing yourself, and going for our sakes, Mrs. Erwin," says Ruth.

"No indeed, I would n't stay at home without a soul to speak to, for all the world." And the little widow, in her dainty black and white cambric, climbs carefully into the chair, and from there into the wagon.

Much good advice has terminated in her consenting to immure her carefully tended complexion in one of Ruth's shakers, on the consideration that the company can not possibly meet any one whose opinion is worth anything, and that the drive is a long, sunny one ; so the loaded wagon is an odd sight, with its fresh, pretty Summer toilets, topped with the long bonnets which bob about incessantly.

"Good-bye, Miss Bounce," calls Ruth, standing up and waving her hand, "it is delightful to be able to make all the noise you want to."

"Hurray ! jes' so," shouts Jabe, touching up the horses, who start off, shaking their heads and switching their tails.

"Jabe, don't you whip them hosses," comes Miss Bounce's voice, in parting command.

“Who is the strange horse?” asks Ruth, who is stationed directly behind the driver.

“One that belongs to the farm. *She* keeps three on 'em out to pastur', she do n't raise much but hay on the farm, an' they have a lazy time on 't. Do n't think much o' hosses any way side o' mules,” remarks Jabe, with the air of a connoisseur.

“Mules?”

“Yes. They don't use much else in aour kaounty; git up Doll. Why, we've got a brown mule to hum that knows more'n most humans. Playful! ye' never see such a playful mule in all yer life.”

“Not with his heels, I hope,” laughs Ruth, who always encourages the boy to talk.

“O, playful all over. Yer'd ought to seen what he done one day when I was drivin'. Ye' see I was in a hurry, fer I was a-goin' for the doctor. My sister Emma, she'd ben a-playin' the fool in the front yard that mornin', climbin' trees an' so on, till at last she'd fell an' broke her collar-bone. Well, ther's a doctor in aour kaounty that's A, number one, on bones, so I was sent fer him double quick. Well, I was a-drivin' Bub, — his name's Beelzebub, but we allers called him Bub for short,

—I was drivin' him as fast as I could, when we ketched up with a flock o' sheep on the road."

By this time Jabe has secured the attention of the whole party, as he raises his voice to be heard above the clatter of the springless old wagon.

"Every sheep in that flock was white but one, an' that un was black as yer hat. Now, what do yer think that playful mule done? He took the trouble to go to the side o' the road, an' kick that black sheep."

The laugh that follows this proof of Bub's humor is changed to a scream, as Jabe, in the flush of pleasure of the successful story-teller, allows the horses to pursue their own course — one which causes a wheel to strike full against a stump, while the wagon slides about and bids fair to turn over.

That catastrophe being averted, the picnickers compose themselves again, and Mrs. Erwin affirms that she is "dreadfully shaken."

"What else can you expect, Mrs. Erwin, wearing a shaker for the first time?" asks unsympathetic Ruth, who has no nerves and consequently only enjoys the excitement.

Mrs. Erwin finds some relief in venting her displeasure indirectly, by finding fault with Nettie for

talking too loud, for stooping, for laughing, and for various similar offences, her niece's meek behavior rendering her daring.

Nettie looks across at Jean for sympathy and encouragement, but Jean appears unconscious of any difficulty, and the girl has to bite her lip and hold her peace all unaided ; and she does it successfully until set free from small persecutions by their arrival at the ground

"I dunno how you'll like it, but this is the place," remarks Jabe, striking into the woods by a wagon-path, which brings the party into a grassy clearing on the bank of the river, busier and more full of tiny waterfalls than at the point which Jean and Ruth have already explored.

"Like it ? Of course we do. It is an ideal picnic ground !" exclaims Jean. "Come Barbara, I see the very spot you and I are going to monopolize," and she helps her friend down from the wagon and leads the way to a mossy incline under one of the noble trees.

"First the air pillow," she continues, taking the same from the basket upon her arm, and placing it close to the tree-roots ; "then this shawl, which goes over it — so ; then Barbara Waite, who lies

down on it — so — and has this thin shawl spread over her — so ;" and Jean tosses her friend's bonnet and her own away on the grass, as she sinks down beside Barbara.

Ruth has refrained from telling Jean of her conversation with Barbara, and now, as she looks at the pair, she realizes that she has done wisely. It is better that Jean should not know that Barbara realizes her delicate condition. She feels the more freedom and hopefulness in caring for her.

"I am sure I wish we all had pillows," says Mrs. Erwin. "Any one could sleep after having been tossed up and down in that wagon for a half an hour. Bring me that blanket shawl, Nettie, and I will improvise a pillow."

"Promise to go to sleep, then. Only on that condition will I let you have it, for I was just going to spread it out for Miss Ruth and me to sit on."

"Keep it, then !" retorts her aunt.

"Thanks ! I will. I'll make a magic carpet, and we will use it Turkish fashion. Come, Aunt Inez, there 's plenty of room for you ;" and Mrs. Erwin, unable to find any thing better, accepts with a rather poor grace.

"If this were a magic carpet, where would you

fly to?" asks Ruth, taking her place. "I am rather glad it is n't. These woods are sufficient for my happiness at present. Jabe, you've left the baskets in the sun."

"I'll see to 'em. I never could do more 'n two things to oncet," returns Jabe, good naturedly.

Mrs. Erwin looks pensive: "There are a good many places I ought to visit, if I could be transported through the air."

"Oh, would n't we look comical?" interrupts Nettie, gathering up the edges of the Rob Roy shawl.

"There were three young women in shakers,
Who traveled o'er hundreds of acres,
Till the birds in the sky,
Wishing faster to fly,
Just lit on the crowns of their shakers."

"Behold the great American jingler!" exclaims Ruth, patting her on the shoulder. "You ought to write a nonsense book."

"Indeed, she ought!" agrees Mrs. Erwin, acidly. "I've often thought so."

"Dearest Aunt Inez, I interrupted you; forgive me; but I know just what you were going to say. You would fly first to the — hospital, trip through the pleasantest ward, and regret that a

pressing engagement prevented you from remaining and reading to the patients."

Mrs. Erwin's offended expression causes Nettie to remember suddenly that she is defacing the new leaf which she turned for Jean's sweet sake only three evenings ago, and she looks quickly at her ideal, ready, if she receives but a warning look, to relinquish her amusement; but no look is forthcoming. Miss Ivory must have heard every word that has passed, but her large, dreamy eyes rest indifferently on the whirling, eddying stream. Evidently Jean is determined that there shall be no bond between herself and the willful speaker.

Nettie imagines she reads her idol's thoughts, and finds in them contempt for herself.

"She will not care for me. She shall be angry with me," she resolves.

"How thankful I am, your mother does not know the trial you are to me, with your impertinence," says Mrs. Erwin.

"Pshaw! Were n't you thinking of the hospital? Now, confess."

"Certainly, I was," returns Mrs. Erwin, with dignity, unable to hold her peace and ignore her

troublesome niece. "You know ve'y well how devoted I am to ——"

"Yes, I'm coming to him," adds Nettie, recklessly. "I was just going to say, that when you had walked through your ward, you would immediately proceed to Mr. Dart's office, and tell him that you had been spending the morning at the hospital. Kenneth, you would say — and you do thay 'Kenneth' tho thweetly!" Nettie talks with her eyes on Jean's face, regardless of the angry color burning in that of her aunt, ready as soon as she shall receive one surprised glance, to stop; but to her mortification, Jean addresses Barbara with a smile, re-arranges the shawl over her, and looks back at the river. Suddenly, an apparition on the bank, between her and the water, interrupts her vision and the thread of Nettie's speech.

"There he is, Aunt Inez! Say it now!" she exclaims, jumping up from the magic carpet and looking at the stranger, a guilty conscience making her unready to fly to meet him.

He is a tall man, with close-cut hair and thick blonde moustache. A broad hat is pushed to the back of his head as he stands, collarless, pantaloons tucked into his boots, and fishing-rod over his

shoulder, surprisedly regarding the group which the sudden grassy space in the woods reveals to him.

Mrs. Erwin starts to her feet, throws off the hateful bonnet, and gives her hair sundry careful pats and drawings-down over her forehead.

"Your wig is one-sided," remarks Nettie, by way of consolation.

The widow flushes redder if possible, runs her finger over the lace parting of her handsome crimps, to make sure of the falsity of the statement, then goes to meet the stranger, who takes off his hat and advances into the shade of the trees.

"Kenneth, you wicked boy!" she exclaims. "Have you been staying in this place without letting me know it?" and placing her hand in his, she comes closer to her very dear friend than there would seem any occasion for, and looks up into his face like a grieved child.

The group is a study for a painter.

Barbara half rises, and looks at the central figures. Jean, paler and straighter than ever, does not lift her eyes after the first look, but lays a detaining hand on Barbara's shoulder, as if to prevent her from rising from her comfortable position.

Mabel and Polly, from their more distant seat,

look as though an invaluable gold nugget had fallen from the clouds into their midst, as they pause in their oak-wreath manufacture, to steal furtive glances at the new comer.

Ruth, red-lipped and rosy, makes no secret of staring in open-mouthed amazement at this disclosure of the identity of her fisherman acquaintance, and Nettie, after standing irresolute a moment, follows her aunt.

“How do you do, little girl?” says the stranger, smiling for the first time, as he holds out his hand to Nettie, freeing it from the widow’s clasp for the purpose. “Has country air made you pensive, or aren’t you glad to see me?”

“No wonder she’s pensive! You did not count on Mr. Dart’s appearing so suddenly, did you? What I go through, with her impertinence, Kenneth, would fill a volume.”

“Let me tell him what I said to offend you, and let him judge for himself how bad I have been,” suggests Nettie.

“You’ll do nothing of the kind!” exclaims Mrs. Erwin, hurriedly and angrily.

Kenneth Dart’s handsome face clouds over as at an oft-repeated annoyance.

"Well, I will pursue my winding way, and see you again," he says.


"No indeed ! Why you have n't answered my question. How could you be so unkind as not to let me know you were here ? "

"How would it have served me ? Miss Bounce keeps a trained tiger, I understand, to devour unwary callers. Have you forgotten the day you came, when she snubbed me so cruelly, and would not allow me to go with you to the farm ? "

"O, she would not be so disobliging always. Miss Ivory thinks—O, excuse me, Miss Ivory, allow me to present my ve'y—my friend, Mr. Dart."

Ruth watches the introduction. Will Jean continue the haughty behavior begun a few days since ? No ; evidently the forms of society are all she demands, and her recognition of the fisherman is sufficiently gracious.

Having started, Mrs. Erwin presents her friend to each of the company, and is surprised when she reaches Ruth, to see Mr. Dart's formal bow followed by a questioning glance, quickly responded to by a frank smile on Miss Exeter's part, followed again by cordial hand-shaking.



"Dear me, have I introduced old friends? I am continually doing that," says Mrs. Erwin, clasp- ing her hands, having grown still more youthful since the gentleman's advent.

"Not very old friends, good friends, I hope," he replies.

"Certainly, Mr. Dart," asserts Ruth. "O, the luxury of saying Mister ! You are not going to deprive us of it immediately, I hope ?"

"Of course not, Kenneth, do stay," begs Mrs. Erwin rather faintly, not being quite sure whether under the circumstances she really desires him to do so.

Mr. Dart looks slowly around at Jean. The young lady is talking with her friend and does not add her invitation. Perhaps that is the one thing which decides him.

He lifts the strap of his basket higher up on his shoulder.

"I have an engagement with some trout farther down the stream," he says with a smile and half bow, "and could n't think of breaking it."

"Pshaw, Kenneth !" exclaims the little widow, "you have fish enough now, in that basket. I can smell them — nasty things — ugh !"

"Thought ye'd be out to-day," speaks Jabe, approaching the stranger, whom he has been eyeing ever since his appearance. "Did n't suppose ye'd be passin' here though, or I would n't ha' brought *them* here," with a jerk of his thumb over his shoulder, at the ladies. "Hain't said a word about ye at the house sence you told me not to," continues the boy, regardless of the expressive frown bent upon him. "Miss Bounce — she axed me some questions, but I answered her kinder per-miscus like," and Jabe nods in self-congratulation. "I knowed ye ——"


"What do you think of these, Jabe?" interrupts the fisherman, lifting the cover of his basket.

"Hullo! three on 'em — beauties!" exclaims the other, lifting out the fish. "Ain't that pretty well, now! Miss Avery, she likes fish. Would n't ye like to help eat 'em, Miss Avery?" holding the fish toward her.

Jean raises her black brows, smiles and nods.

"I'm sure you ought to let her, then, Kenneth," asserts Mrs. Erwin.

"If you will accept so very moist and uncomfortable a gift, Miss Ivory, you will honor me, I'm sure."



"I could not think of separating the fish and their owner," returns Jean, unconscious of the double meaning attachable to her words—bent only on behaving to this man as though she had never seen him before.

"Oh, oh! Miss Ivo'y!" exclaims the widow, spreading her fan over her face. "Kenneth, she will not take the fish, without——"

"Then you will allow me to eat them with you? Thank you," says the fisherman, laying down the rod, and, passing the strap of the basket over his head, he drops his load beneath the trees.

"Jabe, can you cook those fish?"

"Oh, can't I, jest?"

"Well, there they are. My costume," looking down at his high boots, "was not intended for a picnic; but with your permission, I can make it a trifle more finished," and diving into a pocket of his blue flannel coat, the speaker draws forth a collar and necktie, with the former of which he deliberately adorns himself. "Miss Ivory, you can have no idea what a faint feeling came over me when I discovered you all and remembered that my collar was in my pocket. Samson's sensations when he found himself shorn, must have been

something like it ; but now," buttoning his collar, "I feel my strength returning. Nettie, come here and tie my necktie." The girl obeys. "And now I am myself again. If any lady present would like a tree or two uprooted, I shall be happy to oblige her. Miss Waite, I am sorry if I disturbed you," as Barbara rises from her couch.

"You ought to be very glad," returns the girl, smiling. "I needed something to disturb me. Do you know the Red Farm makes people very lazy, Mr. Dart?"

"I should think it must. What have you been doing with yourself, Inez?"

"Just what I expected when I came — sewing a little ; reading a little ; ——"

"Sleeping a great deal," puts in Nettie.

"And being homesick a great deal," finishes the widow, with a sigh, intended to express her long suffering.

"It was very good of you to come, certainly ; and yet, with so many young ladies, there would seem to be no reason why you could not find enjoyment. I suppose your dullness arises from that very fact that you are all ladies."

"So we are ; but we are not all dull," retorts

Mabel, pertly. "I think we are having a splendid time, don't you, Jean?"

"Yes. If it were not for one drawback, my contentment would be perfect."

The young man, stretched at full length on the grass, is conscious of a savage desire to know what the drawback is.

"I am glad I have n't Mrs. Erwin and Nettie on my conscience," observes Ruth, shaking her head. "I betrayed the rest of these unfortunates into coming, and every time one of them looks a little gloomy, I feel it as a personal reproach."

"Then I am glad, for your sake, that they do not look so forbidding as Nettie does," says Kenneth, pleasantly, while he strokes the girl's hand.

"Don't!" she, says impatiently, snatching it away.

"Come with me," he says shortly, but not unkindly, rising from the ground and slapping his sleeve with his handkerchief.

Nettie, looking very sulky, rises also.

"Where is your hat?"

The girl picks up her sun-bonnet.

"You do not suppose I can walk with a young lady who wears that kind of thing?"

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"You'll have to, if you walk with me."

"Oh, no ; I'd rather sacrifice myself," returns Kenneth, drawing the shaker on his own head and placing his flapping hat on Nettie, who laughs in spite of herself.

"If Nettie and I may be excused, I think a short walk will be conducive to her health and happiness," says Mr. Dart, then he moves away among the trees beside his companion, the gingham cape of his headgear hanging over his broad shoulders.

"Well, he is the easiest man I ever saw," laughs Ruth, "one would believe that he had known us all his life."

"Poor Miss Nettie ! I suspect she is about to be lectured," says Jean.

"Lectured ! Mr. Dart never lectured or reprimanded anybody in his life," declares Mrs. Erwin.

"No ?" Jean elongates the interrogation with a significance peculiarly comforting to herself, and incomprehensible to every one else.

Meanwhile Mr. Dart has relieved his chafed ears from the sun-bonnet.

"What is the matter, little girl ? Tell us all about it," he says, as soon as they are out of hear-



ing, but immediately regrets the question, for the uncontrolled child bursts into tears, and walks blindly along until she strikes her foot against a tree root, and would fall but for the arm that catches her.

“Never mind walking any farther, let us sit down,” which they accordingly do, at the foot of an old oak, Nettie’s broad hat being crushed up against the tree trunk in the back, and down over the tearful face, in front.

“Shall we wipe the tears now?” asks Mr. Dart, teasingly yet gently, as Nettie dives about for her pocket, and finds it not. “Here,” and he tucks his silk handkerchief into her hand.

“O, Kenneth, how good you are!” she exclaims wiping her eyes vigorously. “You are the only person in the world that cares a straw about me.”

Mr. Dart leans his large blonde head against that portion of the tree which the hat is not occupying, pulls his moustache, and does not answer. What the girl says is so true, that words will only make the matter worse.

“It is so hard for me to realize that you are no relation to me, and that Aunt Inez is; and yet you

are my brother in a way, are n't you? Your father being my mother's husband, and my mother your father's wife."

"A sort of step-neighbor-in-law," suggests Kenneth.

"If only you were not so much older than I. How old is Aunt Inez, Kenneth?"

The gentleman makes a horrified gesture, and frowns mysteriously. "My child, how should I know?"

Nettie sighs deeply. "O, I am so wretched," she says irrelevantly.

"What is it? Has the aunt been more trying than common?"

"No, just as usual."

"What then? Have you been a naughty girl, and is your conscience making itself offensive?"

"I've been,—O, *she* would call it ill-bred, I suppose, but that does not trouble me in itself, it is — Kenneth, have you ever been in love?"

Mr. Dart smiles broadly at this sudden question.

"Is n't that rather a precocious thought for a person of your tender years?"

"No, because I'm in it myself."

"In what? love?"

"Yes, and what makes me so unhappy is that I'm not loved back."

Kenneth looks in displeased, incredulous surprise at the plain face under the broad hat. The swollen eyes return his gaze pathetically.

"And the worst of it is, when I hate her she won't *hate* back."

Nettie's companion bursts into a hearty laugh.

"Who is the hard-hearted wretch?" he asks.

"Why, Miss Ivory, of course," returns the girl, with a sublime ignoring of every other possible she.

"And can nothing be done in so desperate a case?" inquires Mr. Dart with a whimsical smile. "I should think means might be devised to move her."

"But you have never been in love with Miss Ivory," returns Nettie, with sententious hopelessness.

"I'm glad to have that settled, but if I were in love with her," and the young man clasps his hands behind his head and leans back until he rests upon the grass, "I can not think my ambition would be to have her hate me."

"Yes, it would. You would enough rather

she'd hate you, than be totally indifferent. O, I can't *bear* her indifference."

"Who is that Miss Waite, to whom Miss Ivory seems so devoted?" asks Kenneth, slipping over Nettie's woes, with reprehensible lightness.

"She is an old schoolmate of hers, and Miss Jean loves her as much as ——"

"She does n't love you?" suggests the other.

"Yes; and she is very lovely, too, but very delicate, and Miss Ivory watches her night and day, and keeps her out doors so much that she is growing strong. What did you think of her appearance, Dr. Dart?" and Nettie leans forward with a contagious little chuckle.

Mr. Dart shakes his head.

"I am nearly out of the habit of reading people's symptoms in their faces."

"When will the old business be settled up, and leave you free to prescribe little bits of pellets for great big diseases?"

"The future only can say. Perhaps by the time I am free from attending to the affairs of the estate, I shall be too old to make a reputation in my profession."

"Never mind, so long as you have a pretty

house and let me keep it for you. You have n't forgotten that I am to be your housekeeper? But oh, Kenneth, what shall we do with Aunt Inez?"

"Do with her? I hardly think that she expects us to do any thing with her. Wait until you have been to school a few years more, then we will talk of the future."

"But I am not going to school any more, Aunt Inez says."

"Aunt Inez is a ——" begins the gentleman, angrily, then finishes more cautiously — "is not very wise in some matters."

"She told me she talked to Miss Ivory about it," pursues Nettie, biting a pine needle.

"And what was the advice of this wonderful young lady?"

"What a question," says Nettie, shaking her head in pity for her companion's ignorance.

"It was rather foolish, I admit. There could be but one thing to say — girls of sixteen should not leave school."

"Oh, I did n't mean that. I mean the idea of your thinking that Miss Ivory would condescend to advise with Aunt Inez, and especially about me. If Miss Ivory should say it was best," continues

the girl, impetuously, "I'd go to school forever. But here," with an excited gesture, "here is Miss Ivory's whole attitude to us — she tolerates Aunt Inez ; she ignores me. She always gets away from Aunt Inez as soon as she can politely ; but she is never aware of my presence. Any way," pursues Nettie, after a pause, "I do n't mean to go back to school again. I'm tired of it. I'm going to come out, next Winter. Aunt Inez says she'll 'chape'one' me, if I'll be 've'y' good."

The excellent imitation of Mrs. Erwin's manner does not seem to amuse Kenneth Dart.

"How old are you — exactly?" he asks abruptly.

"Sixteen, next October."


"I thought so. We will go back now," he says, and, as if to change the subject, goes on : "It must be noon, and I am sensibly attracted by those fish."

Nettie raises her eyes, questioningly.

"Help me up," she says, offering her square little hand.

Kenneth obeys.

"I am out of your favor, too. Oh, dear!" she says, moving along beside him.



“Why do n’t you talk?” she asks after a long minute of silence.

“I am afraid you could n’t understand me.”

“Why not? I have never been unable to do so yet.”

“I know ; but I imagined your common sense might be failing you.”

“Because I said that about going to school? Well,” with a long sigh, “I suppose I must go back. I would rather displease Aunt Inez than you.”

“Poor child ! ”

Nettie looks up suddenly, but there is no sarcasm in the grave face.

“I am sorry I can not do more for you.”

“Why, you do every thing for me — every thing, Kenneth,” and the girl impulsively clasps her hands around her companion’s arm, and gives it an affectionate squeeze.

Mr. Dart smiles slightly. “Do I rival Miss Ivory in your affections? ”

“You come first always — *always*; but I was never treated as she treats me. You know that people have always considered me — well, smart,” finishes Nettie, somewhat timidly.

The other nods.

"And she would consider me shocking, if she considered me at all. She thinks I am ill-bred. I heard her tell Miss Exeter so."

Kenneth mutters something under his breath, and frowns, while the young girl pulls down the sides of her hat, and looks up from under its brim to see the effect of her words.

"And Miss Ivory herself never does any thing foolish, or ill-mannered, or gushing, or — or unwise in any way," she continues.

"Happy Miss Ivory!" ejaculates Kenneth, a smile following the frown.

"So one can not find fault with her."

"It does take considerable daring to find fault with her. True for you, Miss Dart."

"Why, what do you know about it?"

"Very little; but I should imagine that she would resent such a thing bitterly. Those eyes of her's now, of what withering glances eyes of that color are capable," returns the young man, thinking of the unexpected meeting on the river bank, where he encountered such a glance from brown eyes in the depths of a bonnet like this one now swinging from his hand. "And is your opinion of this young lady's perfections

shared by the other members of the household?"

"O, yes. She's very rich, you know — of course you didn't know it, but she is, very — and she is very generous, and does lots of good with her money."

"Ah, philanthropic. Yes?"

"Well, what are you smiling about? Don't you believe it? She has just been helping Miss Bounce's sister, giving her money and things. She's so beautifully impulsive."

"I thought I saw that in her face," says Mr. Dart, with the same amused smile.

"Well, they like her; some of them for her money, and because she's stylish and all that; but I love her just because she is herself, and so do Miss Exeter and Miss Waite."

"Then the heiress has three true lovers at least," says Mr. Dart. "Never mind, little girl, go back to school when the time comes, and when you come out a young lady, see if Miss Ivory can not appreciate you better."

"Poor little thing," he thinks, "what would I not give to know how to do more for her," and for the hundredth time, groans in spirit over the

responsibility that has insensibly come to rest entirely upon him, of the guardianship of this strange, wayward girl. "If only Inez were a different woman!" the unspoken wish is interrupted by the widow's familiar voice.

"There you are. The fish are done and we are only waiting for you."

"Don't wait another moment, then, I am more than ready. What a handsome spread! I have not seen one which so appealed to my finer feelings since I left Harvard," returns Mr. Dart as he enters the grassy clearing.

"Make a bow, Jean," suggests Ruth.

"No, indeed, I shall pass the compliment along to Miss Bounce, just as soon as we get home. You see by this, how well we fare at the Red Farm, Mr. Dart," says Jean, easily, and happily for the gentleman, he can not see below the fair, cool surface.

"What a pity Miss Bounce will not take me in," he replies.

"I'll ask her, if you like," offers Mrs. Erwin, eagerly.

"No use, it would be hopeless," and Mr. Dart shakes his blonde head mournfully. "I'm a great

reader of character, and Miss Bounce's face says, — Jabe, what are you grinning at? ”

“I want to hear what *her* face says,” replies Jabe nowise abashed.

“And we want those fish. Miss Ivory, how are we going to serve three trout on a preserve dish? I put it to you.”

“We are not going to try. See, we came prepared for any emergency. There is a large plate, I can not imagine why Miss Bounce put it in, unless she expected us to meet you.”

“Which is not probable, or she would hardly have allowed you to come. Now if you will all be seated, I will show you what I can do as a waiter.”

“No, indeed, I am going to wait on table myself,” asserts Ruth, “I have a particular genius in that line.”

“In that case I yield with pleasure, for I am not at all confident of my powers, beside, I am very hungry. One can not accustom one's internal economy, to apple pie, doughnuts, and bean stew for breakfast, all at once.”

“That's Aunt Allen all over. She does make the wust coffee,” chuckles Jabe to himself, but Mr. Dart overhears the gleeful soliloquy.

"Young man," he says severely, "if you repeat one word that you hear said to-day, you die at sunrise! Do you understand?"

Jabe nods knowingly.

"Ladies and gentlemen, lunch is served," Ruth announces. "Jabe, you sit still and I'll wait on you too," and so saying, she passes plates, napkins and sandwiches, with great *empressement*.

"Ugh! There's a nasty cricket on my dress," exclaims Mrs. Erwin, with a vigorous shake of her skirt.

"Really, this is extremely pleasant," declares Mr. Dart, placing himself between Jean and Barbara.

"I wonder what I had for breakfast that gi' me such an appetite," muses Jabe.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ACCIDENT.

Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud.

—TENNYSON.

“He is handsome, very, Mrs. Erwin,” says Polly Gunther.

“And not only that, but he has such an air, such a style about him. I used to like to have him with my husband and myself, when we were out anywhere. Mr. Erwin loved him like a younger brother,—I was many years younger than Mr. Erwin, myself.”

“Yes, it brightened matters decidedly to have him at the picnic, and how suddenly he appeared ; quite as if by magic.”

“And just in time too. That wicked niece of mine ! I hav’n’t forgiven her yet, for the way she talked to me yesterday. It does seem as if the evil one possessed her occasionally, and at such times, no one but Mr. Dart can have any control over her.”

"I am sure you are too patient with her," murmurs Polly.

"Did you hear what she said about my wig?" asks the widow, flushing at the remembrance. "Of course nearly every lady wears a 'wave' sometimes, to save her own hair, especially in Summer," and Mrs. Erwin touches the front of her elaborate coiffure.

"It was scandalous," declares Miss Gunther.

The two friends are sitting at one of Miss Bounce's front parlor windows, watching the pair of saddle horses, who, under Jabe's superintendence, are awaiting their riders.

"Mr. Dart is a ve'y accomplished man of business too," continues Mrs. Erwin, "and he needs to be, for his father left his affairs in a dreadful muddle. My friend is a physician by profession, although few call him by his title, for he has never practiced regularly."

"I wonder if that is why he looked so intently at Barbara. I thought he must be much impressed by her."

"Very possibly. There they come," as Jean and Barbara pass down the stairs in their habits,

"how well Miss Waite looks, she must be improving fast."

"How well Jean looks," adds Polly, discontentedly, "the brunette style always appears well in riding costume. What a pity there's no one to see her, and how she always laughs and talks with Barbara. There! they see us."

So the two nod and smile at the departing riders, who bow, and are gone.

"There might be some one to see her if Mr. Dart had n't been so obstinate. I could n't get it out of him whether he intended to be in the village long or not, you know men are so uncommunicative. I asked him to come out here and call upon us to-day, but he answered me ve'y unsatisfactorily."

Jean and Barbara canter over the well-known roads, enjoying the late Summer afternoon, and one another's society. Much against Jean's will, their conversation is, for a time, upon the same subject which is being agitated in the parlor at home.

"Can you imagine Mr. Dart, Mrs. Erwin's husband?" asks Barbara, rather breathlessly, notwithstanding the easy motion of her well-trained horse.

"Yes ; why not ? Mrs. Erwin is a woman who requires considerable waiting upon, and he looks well able to take care of her," returns Jean.

"The idea ! Why, she is so much older than he, it is absurd."

"Well, B., I would forbid the bans. Why don't you ?"

"I shall never be called upon to do so. He will never marry her, never," asserts Barbara decidedly.

"That matter is settled then," says Miss Ivory. "How sweet the air is, Barbara," she continues, inhaling long breaths, "don't you hope Miss Bounce will get in a crop of hay while we're here ?"

"Yes," returns Barbara, absently. "Jean, he'll marry her for Nettie's sake, if at all."

"Mousie, you are a wonderful person to learn so much about a stranger in a few hours."

"Not at all, I sat by Mrs. Erwin coming home from the picnic, and she told me a great deal. Jean, I pity that young man, placed in such an uncomfortable position, don't you ?"

"Not at all, B., he probably enjoys thoroughly having Miss Nettie to order about," replies Jean thinking of the fervent though fleeting pity she

once bestowed upon the young man in question.
“I am not so tender-hearted as you.”

“Indeed you are not,” asserts the other, so earnestly that Jean turns to her in surprise.

“To say that you are not tender-hearted does not come very well from me, does it, Jean?” continues Barbara deprecatingly, “but it does seem to me you are very hard upon Nettie Dart, I am sure you do not realize how that girl admires you, or you would turn your influence to some account. She never takes her eyes off you, when you are in the room with her.”

“Yes, I know,” returns Jean; “I have thought it all over, but I always come to the same conclusion, which is that if it is not sufficient for her to see how her behavior appears to the people she admires, any change which she might make at my, or any one’s, request, would be only temporary, and hardly worth while. I think she feels that I have injured her; but it seems strange to me that you believe so too. What can I do? I feel no affection for one who is constantly offending my taste, and who is in no way interesting to me; and I can not see why I ought to feign any.”

Jean speaks so gravely and so decidedly, that

Barbara is somewhat shaken in her hitherto fixed belief, that her friend has only to undertake to be a missionary to Nettie Dart, in order to succeed.

"I might have known you would think it over, and have your own ideas on the subject," she returns; "still, it would not do you any harm to try what a little kindness would do."

"Hear the girl!" exclaims Jean. "One might think that I had been positively inhuman. Do you see that pretty, leafy opening into the woods, Barbara? Let us forsake the beaten path, and explore a little."

"The beaten path is safest, they say," observes Barbara, laughingly, as she follows her companion's lead.

"And what a dull world this would be, if rules had no exceptions," returns Jean, as she enters the wood. "There, B., is some of that moss that I have hunted for every where. I must have some of it. Can you pass me?"

For answer Barbara's horse walks slowly by in the narrow path.

"Now," says Jean, "you can go on, or wait, just as you choose; but I must secure that moss."

"Evidently, Fearless prefers going on," replies Barbara. "What does he hear? Oh, I know — the river. The dear old thing is thirsty."

"Of course, it is the river," says Jean, gathering her habit over one arm. "They say all roads lead to Rome. Every cow-path in Pineland leads to that absurd little river. I should think it would be tied in hard knots, making so many curves and twists."

"*Au revoir!*" calls Barbara, farther and farther away. "Come as soon as you can."

"Yes," returns Jean, stooping over the moss.

On the river bank sits Kenneth Dart, persistently fishing, and, as he has but just arrived and thrown his line, he is in full enjoyment of his surroundings. The long shadows of the trees lie across the stream with a darkness which will surely entice the fish up to a late luncheon. The fisherman's patience is not tested so severely as usual, and, at a quick, strong pull on his line, he lifts his rod with too sudden and energetic a movement, which loses him fish, bait and all. Before he can mutter his disappointment, a faint cry causes him to look up suddenly, and see Miss Waite and her horse making an effect against the sky, which

would be rather fine if carved from black marble, but which is excessively unpleasant for the timid, inexperienced *equestrienne*.

The horse and rider have emerged noiselessly from the wood, upon the river bank, at the precise moment when Mr. Dart whips his slender rod up from the water. The startled horse belies his name and rears suddenly in terror, while Barbara clutches the pommel with both hands.

"Oh, Fearless!" she exclaims, as the animal only lowers his fore feet to dance sidewise, with arched neck and distrustful glance at the object of his fright.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Waite. Be quiet," says Dart, dropping the rod and coming slowly toward her.

Should the horse attempt to run, his rider would suffer from scratches and bruises from the trees, if nothing more.

"Oh, do come quickly!" exclaims Barbara, growing very pale, as Fearless, taking exception either to Mr. Dart's extravagantly broad hat, or to some other object in the scenery, rears slightly again, and dances still further away from the pursuer.

“Whoa— whoa,” calls Kenneth, soothingly. “Don’t rein him in too tightly, Miss Waite.”

The caution is hardly necessary, as Barbara, more and more terrified, clings tightly to the pommel as her only safety, giving Fearless complete freedom to gyrate as best suits himself.

Kenneth is so close as to make a dash at the bridle. The horse shakes his head and springs away, and Barbara blindly relinquishes her hold on the saddle and throws herself in Mr. Dart’s direction.

By good fortune, for her movement is entirely unexpected, he catches her. There is a jerk as her foot leaves the stirrup. She utters a shrill cry, then the young man stands, holding an unconscious woman in his arms, while a crackling in the woods indicates which direction her steed has taken.

Meanwhile, Jean has gathered her moss, gazed at it lovingly, and is just considering how to transport it in the safest manner, when a cry of pain assails her ears. She raises her head one moment in a listening attitude, then drops the moss and mounts her horse, using a tall stump for a step.

“Barbara ! Barbara ! I am coming !” she calls, urging her animal along the path. A crackling to

the right of her course is speedily followed by Fearless, whom she sees through the leaves, coming at an ever slackening pace, as the obstructions in the woods grow denser.

"Oh, Barbara! where are you?" she cries, in a panic.

"This way," calls a man's voice, and, emerging from the woods, Jean sees Kenneth Dart on one knee, supporting Barbara, unconscious, across the other.

In a flash, Jean understands the situation. Mr. Dart, fishing, has in some way frightened Barbara's horse, which has thrown her; and as she slips from the saddle, she is almost frightened at the wrath with which she is filled, against the worker of the mischief.

"Oh! is she dead? Have you killed her?" she asks, bending down over her friend, and bringing her white forehead close to the man's face.

"Miss Waite has fainted, that is all," returns Kenneth, lightly; "and no wonder, for that absurd animal——"

"What do you mean by talking? Why don't you do something?" demands Jean, imperiously, taking one of Barbara's hands.

Mr. Dart feels strangely bewildered. Why is it so difficult to transfer his attention from the superb face, instinct with life and animation, to the dead one against his breast, and he a physician, too?

"Bring some water in my hat, Miss Ivory. This is nothing serious. Do not be so alarmed."

"'Nothing serious'—and she looks so dreadful! Give her to me! I must hold her—poor little B. You get the water, and rub her hands, and do every thing else you can think of," and unreasonable Jean, seating herself, passes her arm around her friend, and draws her into her own lap.

At the movement, Barbara shivers, groans and opens her eyes; then, with a moan, they close again.

Kenneth Dart's face grows serious. "That looks bad," he says.

"What looks bad? what?" asks Jean, eagerly. "Do hurry! Why don't you hurry?"

At this, Kenneth brings the hatful of water, and applies it. With returning life, Barbara's moaning recommences.

"Oh, what is it? what is it, Barbara?" asks Jean, before the girl is fairly conscious.

"This is how it happened, Miss Ivory," begins Dart, as he rubs the hands. "I was ——"

"Yes, oh, yes, I know. You were fishing and you frightened her horse."

Mr. Dart stares at this prescience.

"You and I together have killed her," continues Jean, shaking her dark, uncovered head — for her hat is with the moss in the forest.

"'You and I together,'" repeats Mr. Dart, in a voice not nearly miserable enough to suit the emergency.

"What is it, dear! Tell me! Tell Jean!" coaxes the girl, as the groans grow more pronounced, and the gray eyes open wider.

"My foot! oh, my foot!" murmurs Barbara — the exclamation a groan in itself.

"It's her foot, Mr. Dart! It is broken!" announces Jean, jumping straightway at the direst possible conclusion. "What shall we do? You don't know any thing; neither do I."

"Companions again, any way," mutters the gentleman, turning back the riding-habit in spite of the wholesale denunciation, and examining the little feet. Thanks to the freedom and carelessness of retired country life, Barbara's shoes are scarcely higher than slippers. No room for question as to which foot has suffered — one of the

ankles is rapidly swelling to twice the size of its mate.

Barbara jumps as the gentleman examines it — all the buried love of his chosen profession rising within him.

“How dare you hurt her?” exclaims Jean, with blazing eyes. “You have done enough to-day, I think. Do n’t you touch her foot again.”

“No; it’s not broken,” says Kenneth, quietly; “only a sprain.”

“Yes; I know, my foot was turned in the stirrup,” says Barbara, with white lips. “What a shocking coward I am about pain! Thank you so much, Mr. Dart, for catching me.”

“The idea of her thanking him!” thinks Jean, upon whom the gentleman’s cool ignoring of her sharp words has had a subduing effect — and there is that now in his face, and in his manner of treating the injured foot, which makes her glad of his presence.

“Although, to be sure, if he had n’t been mousing about here in the first place, we should n’t need him now,” she thinks, repenting the temporary heresy included in welcoming the presence of “Yours Truly,” under any circumstances.

"If you can forgive Mr. Dart, perhaps you can forgive me, Barbara, for giving you an unsafe horse. Oh, you do not know how loaded with guilt I feel, Mousie," and the black head bends over the brown one. "I am always meaning well, and doing wrong."

As Jean makes this admission, she raises her head, and her eyes, with their unshed tears, meet Mr. Dart's.

She had forgotten his very existence for the moment; but his expression, as he looks upon her, calls a deep, hot blush to her face, which dries her tears where they stand.

In that look she confesses to the foreknowledge which she has had of him, and he tells her, plain as eyes can say, that he believes in her, and understands her.

It may be that Jean sees more than this in the eloquent look, but she is cool in a moment, all the girlish misery gone out of her business-like voice.

"Could you sit my horse, do you think, B.?"

"No, she would suffer too much with the blood running into her foot, the wrenched cords are very sensitive," interposes Mr. Dart, decidedly.

“Really? You speak as one having authority,” says Jean with slight scorn.

“Yes, because I have it. Dr. Dart, ladies, at your service. I will send for my sheepskin if you doubt me,” as he sees Jean’s incredulous look. “I admit I have dawdled over this matter unwarrantably, but I will try to make up for it now. Shall you or I go back to the farm for a carriage, Miss Ivory? I should suggest that you be the one, for I can, in the meantime, be carrying Miss Waite through the woods to the road, and some time will be saved.”

It does not need the added request in Barbara’s eyes to make Jean assent to this arrangement, and she gently removes herself from her position, while Mr. Dart helps the sufferer into a sitting posture.

“Be sure I will hurry as fast as possible, dear,” she says as she rises.

Mr. Dart brings the horse, which has been quietly cropping grass near by, and without a word lifts Jean bodily into the saddle.

The color flies to her face at the unexpected action, but Mr. Dart’s manner and expression are so business like, that she is ashamed of herself for

having a trivial thought, when the only object in both minds should be to save time.

"Do not bring Jabe, or else do not return yourself, we shall want all the room possible in the carriage."

Jean bows slightly, without looking at the speaker.

"Where is your hat, Jean! Take mine," says Barbara, faintly.

"No, I will stop for mine in the woods, it will not delay me a minute," and with a parting glance full of pity, Jean rides off.

Mr. Dart looks after her while she is visible. Too soon the beautiful silhouette disappears.

"I wish I could remember exactly what I said in that confounded, blundering letter," he thinks, then turns and brings his mind back to duty.

For Jean to dismount and get her hat, is the work of few moments, and she has reached the road, and is flying over it at the best speed of which her animal is capable.

"Will the stranger hurt B. very much, carrying her through the woods?" she wonders; then she remembers the case with which Mr. Dart managed her own one hundred and thirty odd pounds,



and decides that Barbara is as well off as may be. But the sudden color which this memory calls up, dies out of her cheek as she realizes what this accident actually means.

A sprain is more obstinate, if less serious, than a break. No one can tell how many weeks must pass before Barbara can again take the air and exercise which have wrought so good a work.

Jean's eyes fill with tears of disappointment and resentment. This fair, handsome stranger, with his well-trained manner and muscles, has wrought for her all the real trouble her short, pleasant life has ever known, and her mouth is unpleasantly set, as she rides fast and furiously up to the side door of the farm house.

"Miss Bounce," she says, bursting into the kitchen, where that personage is mixing bread, "where is Jabe? I want Dolly and the carryall quick; Miss Waite has sprained her ankle."

"I want to know," returns Miss Hopeful, drawing one hand out of the dough, and rubbing her chin with her wrist.

"Yes, quick; where's Jabe?"

"I could n't tell if I was to die. Now ain't that unfort'nate?"

Jean gives a little stamp as a slight vent for her feelings.

"Don't you know how to harness, Miss Bounce?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"Then come quick; what are you waiting for?"

"How dreadful excitable you be, Miss Avery; do let me git the dough off my hands."

But before that task is fairly accomplished, Jean has dragged her hostess out to the red barn, whither her horse has preceded her.

"O, this great, clumsy skirt! I can hardly move in it, but I mustn't take time to change it; do hurry, Miss Bounce. Where are the others?"

"I donno I'm sure. They went off to find huckleberries, I believe," replies Miss Bounce, slipping the harness over patient Dolly's head, and decorating the same with bits of dough, while Jean facilitates matters by buckling straps in the wrong places.

Dolly looks around in mild surprise at the unusual proceedings.

"There, I am sure that will do, Miss Bounce," says Jean, at last.

"I declare, seems if I'd forgot how to harness

after all, or else you've flustered me so I ain't got my right wits," returns Miss Hopeful. "She's hitched to the carryall, an' that's about all you can say for it," she continues, as Jean jumps in and takes the reins, and Dolly moves majestically out of the barn, utterly refusing to be hurried until the inclined plane is passed, and she is trotting over level ground.

"It's borne in on me that there's somethin' wrong with poor Doll's head-gear," muses Miss Bounce, going slowly back to the house. "I'm mistaken, or else she's bein' driven by one ear. O, Summer boarders *is* a means o' grace sometimes, an' no mistake."

Upon arriving at the entrance to the woods, Jean finds Mr. Dart and Barbara waiting, the latter with her hand pressed tightly over her eyes.

"Poor young lady, a sprained ankle is a wretched thing," declares Mr. Dart, in acknowledgement of Barbara's suffering, "but we will soon have you comfortable I hope."

Jean's face is hard and dark, all the sunlight of its brilliant, mobile expression, gone under the cloud of her displeasure. She says nothing, but standing up in the front of the conveyance, pulls

the movable front seat toward her as far as possible. Even she can not resist a passing admiration of the tender strength with which her foe gathers Barbara in his arms, and places her on the ragged cushion at the back of the carriage. It is as easily done as though she were a baby in long clothes, instead of a young lady in a riding habit, but the irrepressible, faint cry which the sufferer utters, hardens her again.

"Thank you, Mr. Dart," says Jean, superbly, taking the reins and seating herself, preparatory to moving off.

"No, no, you mustn't sit down, Miss Ivory, or that is, not on that seat ; get out of the carriage a moment please."

Jean looks disdainfully at the speaker. "Will nothing teach the odious man his true position," she wonders, "or is he incapable of shame?" Barbara's moans confuse her, however, and knowing nothing better to do, she obeys.

"There, we will fold the seat up close against the dashboard, so," says Mr. Dart, pleasantly, "and you and I can sit right in the bottom of this — a —— family ark."

"You! There is no occasion for your coming

with us, Mr. Dart," says Jean, with dignity, "I should be obliged to you, however, if you would go for the doctor."

"I will do better than that for you, I will go with you myself. I was involuntarily responsible for the accident—under you, of course," here Jean blushes angrily, "and it is incumbent upon me to do all I can to remedy it. I will get in first, to support the poor foot, and you—you will have to sit where you can, Miss Ivory, and drive."

Jean is stupefied at the pleasant assurance of these words, and stands helplessly watching the carrying out of the programme.

"You are *so* kind," says Barbara, with a grateful glance at Mr. Dart, as the arrangement is perfected.

Jean feels herself in a decided minority, and humbly mounting into the vehicle, makes herself as small as possible on the floor beside the young physician, who, as Dolly turns slowly about, sings softly :

"'T was in a low-backed car.'"


Poor, suffering Barbara giggles hysterically.

"It's the funniest thing I ever saw," she says, half crying. "Ruth would die laughing, to see

us, I am so exactly like a man with the gout ; and you two look perfectly comical. Do n't laugh, Dr. Dart !" with an imploring gesture. " You shake me worse than the carriage."

" Pardon me ; I will not. How blessed we are in having so soft a road and careful a driver ; but what is the matter with your high-mettled steed, Miss Ivory ? Do they raise one-eared horses in this part of the country ? "

Jean bites her lip. Some narrow strap, with an unknown name, has strayed from the path of duty, and is pinioning one of Dolly's ears tight to her head, while the old mare appears in a general way to be in undress uniform ; but neither this nor ● any thing else will induce Jean to smile, so, finally settling into solemn silence, the ambulance draws up to the farm-house door, bringing, for the first time in many years of the carryall's experience, a man to the Red Farm.



CHAPTER XII.

DR. DART.

The sun has hid its rays.—ADELAIDE PROCTOR.

“Just as of old ; just as of old,” sings Ruth ; then adds, “that is, with a difference, inasmuch as one of our number is *hors de combat*. How exactly like our self-sacrificing Barbara, to sprain her ankle and give us a little excitement.”

The graduating class is once again by itself, as Mrs. Erwin and Nettie have driven to Pineland Centre, on some errand connected with the latter’s wardrobe.

Miss Bounce’s parlor is desecrated now by even more common use than ever before. In the middle of the room is a lounge, placed in the most favorable position to catch possible breezes, and upon this lounge half lies and half sits Barbara Waite, the slowly improving foot supported upon a chair.

“I am afraid I did n’t consider your happiness when I sprained my ankle,” returns Barbara. “To think that it is only three days since ! By the way,

Jean," turning to her friend, who is seated on the floor, leaning her head against the casement of the window, "I have not asked what became of Fearless."

"He has gone back to the city, without a character. I believe Mr. Dart found him sampling berries in the woods, not far from the scene of your adventure. I wish he had tried some deadly-nightshade."

"I do not think the poor creature behaved very badly," says Barbara. "No wonder he was frightened at the whirr of that rod in the stillness! It would be just as sensible to blame Dr. Dart,"—Barbara is the only one of the little circle who always gives her new friend the benefit of his title—"and say he ought not to have been there, fishing."

"So I do," returns Jean, "or, at least, he has no right to wear a hat which secludes him completely from every thing in nature but his fishing tackle."

"There was no one to blame but myself," asserts Barbara, smiling. "I was such a coward that I acted like a crazy person, jumping from the saddle as I did, instead of letting Fearless carry me

into the woods, Of course, he could n't have gone far."

"You would n't have gone far with him, at all events," says Mabel. "The branch of some tree would have scraped you off, speedily."

"Well, I did it ; and now I have to pay for it," says Barbara, sighing.

"Of course, it was all your fault," says Jean, ironically.

"Never mind the *modus operandi*," says Ruth, grandly. "B. is a heroine. She has accomplished the grand object, and introduced a gentleman in our midst. There is somebody to dress up for, afternoons. There is somebody to group ourselves for, as we anxiously watch Barbara's foot being unrolled, gaze upon its astonishing size and beautiful rainbow tints a minute, then view the bandaging process until it is done up again as snugly as a mummy, when we gradually relax and ask the doctor innocent questions. How long do you think you can keep it up, Barbara? What consideration would tempt you——"

"Nothing shall tempt me to let you all stay in the room to-day," laughs Barbara.

"Pshaw, B.! You do n't mean to say that you

are going to be as unkind as that? Why, look at my toilet!" and Ruth spreads out her gray organdie, covered with tiny bunches of pale blue. "View these crimps! I have n't moved for a quarter of an hour, for fear something should happen to them."

Barbara shakes her head firmly.

"No, ma'am; no one but Jean shall stay with me."

"Oh!" exclaims Ruth, raising her eyebrows with an enlightened air. "There is a horrible slang expression which adequately describes this affair. It is evidently a pre-arranged occurrence. Barbara and Jean arranged it all the day of the picnic — of course they did; and now they intend to monopolize the result."

Jean smiles — half contemptuously, but half sadly. No amount of Ruth's ready nonsense can alter the fact that Barbara has relapsed into paleness and lassitude. It seems, even, that she has grown visibly thinner in these two suffering days. What kind of preparation is this for the Winter of labor before her? What report will Jean carry back to the patient, waiting mother, in the heated city beyond?

“Always meaning well, and doing wrong,” she thinks ; “taking it upon myself to bring Barbara out here, and then making her ride a horse I could not be sure of.”

“Jean, I’m going to tell the girls about our —you know,” continues Ruth, with mysterious significance, interrupting her friend’s remorseful meditations.

“Are you? That’s nice ! I want to hear, too, for I *don’t* know at all,” returns the girl, languidly.

“There, girls, does n’t Jean look positively oriental in that position? Do n’t move your head — there, I thought I could revive you !” as Jean straightens up and faces her, “Do n’t be so far away, my dear !”

“You see, girls, Jean and I met Mr. Dart once before, in the woods. He was fishing ; we, exploring. He assisted us to cross the creek on the rocks —that is, he assisted me. Jean crossed by herself. Did n’t you, Jean?” and Ruth rocks to and fro, and laughs gleefully at the remembrance ; then, as Jean does not smile, “I believe you are going to be a disciple of the Bounce, Jean, a regular man-hater. Did n’t dear old Hopeful look petrified when Mr. Dart brought Barbara in here?”

"But how kind she was," puts in Barbara. "She took my head right down on her shoulder."

"Yes! Was n't it just about as luxurious as resting on a picket fence?" inquires Ruth. "But when she learned that Mr. Dart was a physician, she had to stand it, although she did put in a plea for the village doctor, to which no one paid any attention."

"There's the carriage," announces the hitherto silent Polly, from the window. "There is some one beside Jabe on the front seat. It's — no, it is n't — yes, it is Mr. Dart."

"I'll warrant," says Ruth, coming discreetly near and peering around the edge of the window, "Mrs. Erwin has probably searched the highways and by-ways for him."

"And who, I wonder, has a better right!" retorts Polly. "I think myself it was very thoughtful of her to bring him, when she knew he had to come any way."

"Excellent-hearted girl!" says Ruth, patting Polly's shoulder, patronizingly, "always stand up for the oppressed."

"Pooh! Do n't be silly! Of course, Mrs. Er-

win need not stand upon ceremony with the man she is going to marry."

"Guard against exaggeration, Polly. They're not engaged. I asked her, point-blank, this morning;" and with this, Ruth leaves the room and goes out to meet the new-comers.

"And how is my patient, my victim, Miss Exeter?" asks the young doctor, as he hands Mrs. Erwin and Nettie from the carriage.

"Your patient victim is better, I think; but there is not much to judge by. She is in the usual chronic dread lest some one should touch the chair her foot is in, and is very sweet about having to keep still."

"Dear me! I do n't call that much of a virtue, this weather," says Mrs. Erwin, who is peevishly jealous already of Barbara and her ankle, and quite disposed to consider the accident a carefully-set trap into which her very dear friend has fallen, with generous short-sightedness.

"I will go in and see for myself," says Dr. Dart, passing into the house.

Mrs. Erwin turns to Ruth, leaning, tall and graceful, against one of the slim, old-fashioned pillars which support the roof of the portico.

"I should like to ask you, Miss Exeter," she says fretfully, "if you do not consider Mr. Dart dreadfully Quixotic, to insist upon remaining away from business, solely to attend to that trifling sprain, as if the doctor here would not answer quite as well? It is the most absurd thing I ever heard of."

Ruth turns to Jabe who is slowly transferring the widow's packages from the carriage to the piazza.

"How is that, Jabe? Is the doctor here 'A, No. 1, on bones?'"

Jabe shakes his head.

"Donno much about him. Don't believe he's so good as our doctor t' hum. Our folks thinks they ain't nobody like him. Once when I was a little feller, I tumbled out 'n a winder an' put my shoulder out o' jint. My! how my father did make tracks for Dr. Stickby!"

"And did he hurt you, pulling it into place?"

"No; 'cause afore he 'd had time to git there, I'd tumbled out 'n the same winder, an' snapped it in myself."

Ruth's merry laugh offends Mrs. Erwin's ears.

"You were like the bramble-bush man, Jabe."

"I am surprised to see Miss Waite allow such a sacrifice," pursues the widow, sternly, as Jabe and the carryall move toward the barn.

"Stuff and nonsense, Aunt Inez," remarks Nettie, untwisting a closed morning-glory, "what if it had been *your* ankle?"

"I hope that would be a different thing," returns Mrs. Erwin, with dignity.

"Yes ; it would be a much larger thing," assents the girl, wickedly.

Ruth hurries to intercept any reproof from the vexed widow.

"I think it can hardly be a great sacrifice for your friend, so long as he intends remaining here in any case. One can not fish all the time."

"Naturally, you look at the case from your standpoint, and are willing that your friend should have the best of every thing," returns Mrs. Erwin, gathering up her parcels, "and, naturally, I look out for Mr. Dart, and am ve'y sorry to see him placed in so uncomfortable a position ;" and, speaking with considerable heat, Mrs. Erwin trails into the house, with an all-pervading sense of injury upon her. She directs one passing, scathing glance at the closed door of the parlor, and moves

up stairs, intending to make herself altogether lovely, ready to see her dear friend at tea.

Meanwhile, Dr. Dart has been making his professional visit — Polly and Mabel leaving the room as he enters it.

He shakes hands with Barbara, and bows to Jean, whose attitude and manner invite nothing less formal.

"I wish I could take this house up and set it down on the seashore, or among the mountains," he says, drawing his handkerchief across his forehead, and seating himself by Barbara's couch, behind which stands Jean, statuesque and cool, but flushing at this speech.

"It would have been better for Barbara,— Miss Waite should have gone to the mountains, should she not?" she asks, her dark eyes the more anxious and eager, that the invalid can not see them.

Kenneth Dart meets their steady, questioning light, and strives to look wisely professional, and nothing more. It is a question with him for one moment, if he will not reply strongly in the affirmative, and make Jean feel that she has been unwise — rightly conjecturing that inasmuch as he appears

to understand Barbara's condition, in just so much will he gain importance in the opinion of her devoted nurse.

Only for a moment, he hesitates ; then wonders at himself for admitting for one instant a thought which could give pain to the sensitive soul looking at him so self-forgetfully.

"The Red Farm would have been a delightfully healthful spot for Miss Waite, if it had not been for the dangerous characters prowling about the river," he answers lightly. "I assure you, the fish are enjoying a holiday from me, now. How is the foot, to-day ?"

"Getting on, I think," replies Barbara, brightly. "It hurts me dreadfully to move it, so I move it a good deal."

"Well, it's all a matter of taste," returns Dr. Dart, smiling, and taking from the hand-bag he carries, a bottle and roll of linen. "I think, under those circumstances, I should keep my foot still."

Jean watches his quick, neat movements, and thinks the position a decidedly strange one.

"He does n't look at all like a doctor," she decides, "with that short-cropped hair and mous-

tache, so well shaped as to be nearly dandified. Perhaps he is an imposter. How do we know?" she questions, sternly, being entirely convinced all the time to the contrary. "By his own confession he is not a regular practitioner, and I am behaving badly to Barbara in not insisting upon her having better advice;" and thus fortified, she is about to enter upon the subject with her usual alarming frankness, when the young man himself speaks.

"Be good enough to hold this for me, Miss Ivory," he says; "I have wet this bandage, and have n't any place to lay it;" and Jean comes around the foot of the couch, and stands beside him, with a countenance not suggestive of meekness.

"Are you quite sure you understand what is the best thing to do in this case, Mr. Dart? You surely can have had but little experience," she says.

Dr. Dart looks up quickly from the white hands across which he has laid the linen, and Jean's eyes meet his searching, amused gaze.

"Are references required, Miss Ivory?" he asks smiling; then goes about his work gravely and deftly, while Jean grows hot and angry.

"Unless Miss Waite improves fast," she begins

— but a surprised, reproachful glance from Barbara checks her.

“I understand,” says Kenneth, slowly, all his attention fixed on the rainbow tints to which Ruth has referred, “unless we can cure this sprain among us, we are to have a conclave of the most skillful surgeons in Boston, to sit upon it.”

“Oh, dreadful!” laughs Barbara, uncomfortably, wishing to turn the matter off as a joke, while Jean again feels ridiculed and humiliated, and wonders why this stranger has such power to irritate her.

“You see, Miss Waite, I feel as if I could let no one else attend you through this troublesome period, for I am so very sorry to have caused the ruin of your Summer’s pleasure.”

“You did not, Dr. Dart,” protests Barbara, earnestly; “and, believe me, I am very grateful to you for not leaving me to the mercies of a country practitioner.”

Jean feels excessively uncomfortable, and the beautiful color which is a true brunette’s prerogative, glows in her cheeks.

Dr. Dart takes no further notice of her. She has served his purpose as a table, and the bandag-

ing over, is allowed to return to her old position by the window.

"You have never been very strong at best, I judge, Miss Waite?"

"No. My father died of consumption, and I am afraid I have a tendency that way," replies Barbara, quietly.

Jean does not trust herself to look in the direction of the speakers. It is the first time she has heard Barbara speak of her health, and her heart sinks, heavy as lead within her.

"Ah? Then you should be glad that you belong to a generation which knows how to foil that arch-enemy," returns the doctor, brightly. "I dare say your school life has been too confining for you, but that is over now."

"No, I must teach in the Fall," says Barbara, with her perilously clear gray eyes fixed intently on the other's face, which she sees foreshortened as he leans forward, resting his elbows on his knees, and his chin upon his intertwined fingers. "How will that kind of life do for me? Can I observe such rules as to be able to bear it a long time?"

"I do not know you well, yet, but I do not

think you are very ill, Miss Waite. I think you may take a bright view of your future."

Barbara looks down at her folded hands.

"I saw my father die," she says simply.

Jean's eyes are swimming. She could bless the young physician for his bright words, ignorant though they may be; and how strange it seems to hear Barbara talk so openly to him. Then a new thought flits through Jean's excited mind.

How beautiful it would be for Barbara to marry this man, and how natural for him to love her and shield her. She feels that in that case she could forgive his ungrateful, priggish return of her charity, and laugh at the whole matter as rather a good joke. She could even talk it over with Barbara's husband, and remind him of the time he so severely snubbed her, and forgive him too, for being the cause of the accident which had brought about such happy results.

"I am going to give you some medicine to take while you are confined to the house," speaks the doctor again; "it will help to bridge over this period of inaction, and counteract bad results. I will bring it as soon as possible, and now I must

say good-bye, for it would never do to force Miss Bounce to invite me to tea."

"Do n't wait for her invitation, you have ours ; won't that do ?" asks Barbara, with timely recollection of Ruth's toilet.

"Not this time, I think," then Doctor Dart turns as if to address Jean, and finds her looking at him with moist eyes and parted lips, and an expression in her face that is new to him. Not even on that memorable day when she bestowed so eager and kind a glance upon him as he passed out of D——'s drug store, did the mobile face look so beautiful.

"You will go into the city to-night ? Or give me the prescription and I will send a messenger." So the lovely expression is explained.

Nevertheless Kenneth Dart gazes upon the beauty before him for a long moment before he answers.

"No time shall be wasted, Miss Ivory. Good afternoon."

As he speaks, he half offers his hand. But Jean has resented the expressive look, and lowering her eyes appears not to see the little friendly motion.

"Good afternoon," she responds in a low tone.

"I shall see you to-morrow?" smiles Barbara, with extra cordiality.

"I think so." Then with a bow which includes both young ladies, Dr. Dart leaves the room

"Jean, do you know you looked positively hateful when Dr. Dart tried to shake hands with you? What is the matter with you?" asks Barbara, not a little exasperated. "What a return for his kindness!"

Miss Ivory's face is glowing painfully. As usual with this young doctor, she has been left with a feeling of awkwardness upon her; a consciousness that in proportion to her lights, she has been far more ill-bred than was ever the much-ignored and looked-down-upon Nettie Dart; but it is no easier for Jean to own herself in the wrong, than it is for other people.

"If I returned your physician's kindness as it deserves, B., I should not be as polite to him as I am. But for him, you would be roaming about now, getting an appetite and roses."

"White roses, I am afraid; I can not flatter myself that pink cheeks are ever for me," returns Barbara, cheerfully.

"A good appetite will perform wonders," de-

clares Jean, "but no doubt Fearless would have done something dreadful, sooner or later, even without the intervention of Mr. Dart, and that is where my kindness shows to advantage. Scold me, Barbara, I deserve it," and Jean seating herself on the floor by the lounge, leans her head against it.

"I forbid you to say another word of that kind. I am ashamed of you for being so narrow. What has become of the 'sound mind in a sound body' that Professor Laramie used to talk about, and of which you used to be an example? To think of your cause for complaint against that kind, unselfish gentleman, and the way you treat him! Why, one look at his face is enough. It is the cleanest," here a gasp comes from Jean, "the best face, with the steadiest, most expressive, *good-looking* eyes I ever saw. No one but you—"

"O, stop, stop! No fair, Mousie! I did n't say you might scold so hard as that," and Jean puts her hands over her bowed head as if to shield it from the unwonted storm. The right one wears a large emerald, the other is ringless.

Barbara pats the hands, so round and white, against their black back-ground.

"Very well, see that you behave better in future," she says.

Dr. Dart closes the parlor door behind him, pained to have discovered Miss Ivory's aversion to himself, aside from any possible use he may be to her delicate friend, and some trace of chagrin is in his countenance as he steps out upon the piazza, where Ruth is still sitting.

"Is every thing as it should be?" she asks over her shoulder.

"Hardly," he answers.

"What is the matter?" asks Ruth, with some anxiety.

"Mortification has set in, Miss Exeter," he replies, with a quizzical smile, "but not in the ankle, that is doing well. Can you inform me of the whereabouts of your landlady?"

"I can take you to her, she is picking strawberries," and Ruth, rising, moves off beside the gentleman, watched by three pairs of eyes, Mabel's and Polly's from the chestnut grove, and Mrs. Erwin's, from behind the closed blinds of her apartment.

"She has been lying in wait for him all this time, I dare say," thinks the widow, bitterly.

She sincerely regrets coming to the Red Farm, and tells herself that if she can only escape with her very dear friend before he shall have become interested in either of these young ladies, she will be doing well.

Whether Mrs. Erwin expects to marry Kenneth Dart or no, would be a hard question for any one to answer, herself included. He has been frankly kind to her since her husband's death, and a strong link in their intimacy has been the care of Nettie, but the widow has never deluded herself into the belief that he loves her. Still she feels a proprietorship in him, is proud of him, loves him in her way, poor faded little lady, for he has formed the greater part of her world during her years of mourning and seclusion, and the hardest trial in life to her, next to being obliged to give up the pomps and vanities of society during another year, would be the knowledge that he belonged definitely to a younger, prettier woman than herself.

Back through the orchard Ruth conducts Dr. Dart.

"It is selfish of me not to be helping Miss Bounce with her strawberries. Poor thing, I think she must be glad this is the last of them, for it

takes her so long to pick enough for us. We have quite awful appetites," admits Ruth. "There she is, just across the brook. Do you dare venture into her presence unprotected?"

"Yes, if you will wait here, and see that there is fair play," replies the gentleman, striding across the sleepy little brook, while Ruth seats herself on the rustic sofa.

Miss Bounce, in the seclusion of her sun-bonnet, is stooping among the strawberry vines, busily at work, but looks up suddenly, as a masculine voice greets her. Upon seeing the young doctor she stands very straight and confronts him, dark suspicion in her eye.

"Pardon me for disturbing you, Miss Bounce, but I have some directions to leave about Miss Waite, that I think will be more sure to be attended to by you than any one else."

"Humph!" ejaculates Miss Hopeful, not insensible to the subtle flattery of the refined voice.

"I want Miss Waite to have some whisky every day, and I know you ——"

"You know I — what? What do you mean, sir? I guess every body in Pineland knows I've signed the pledge," interrupts the spinster, ex-

citedly. "You come here to insult me in my own strawberry patch? I'll have you know ——"

"But, Miss Bounce, you misunderstand me," interposes the young doctor, waving his handkerchief behind his back to Ruth, as a danger signal. "All I mean is that Miss Waite must have some egg-nog every day, to help keep up her strength. How could you think I would insinuate any thing against so admirable a hostess as yourself? Now I feel certain that you would make a really artistic egg-nog."

"*I* don't feel certain about it at all!" retorts Miss Bounce, a trifle ashamed of her asperity. "I donno as my principles would allow me to make a drink in my house, with whisky in it."

"Not in case of sickness? Think a minute. Would n't it be a still greater load on your conscience, to look at Miss Waite and think that you might do something for her, and had refused?"

"I donno as it would do her any good," says Miss Bounce, looking down and pushing aside a decayed leaf with her foot.

"But I say it would."

Miss Hopeful is silent for half a minute.

"I hain't got ~~any~~ liquor," she remarks at last, looking up at her companion.

Mr. Dart puts his hand in the pocket of his dark flannel sack-coat, and draws forth a flask.

"It's pure," he says, unscrewing the top, while his lips twitch. "Would you like to smell of it and make sure?"

Miss Bounce looks at him still more suspiciously; but his face is gravely serene as he proffers the flask.

"I donno nothing about it; but I'll use it, if you say I oughter."

"I do, Miss Bounce, and thank you, too. Won't you shake hands with me, to show that you forgive me for deposing your old physician?"

Miss Hopeful can not resist the handsome face and winning manner. She gives him her hand rather awkwardly.

"*He* do n't amount to much, an' you'll git all stained," she remarks practically; but in her heart of hearts she likes the way Kenneth Dart raises his hat to her, as he turns to go — a narrow straw hat this time, with a slightly rolling brim.

As he moves away, she gives a furtive look at the elegant little flask in her hand.

"K. D.," she says, reading the initials, then slips it into her pocket. "To think that I should be hiding a rum-bottle at my time of life!" she thinks, with a grim smile, as she returns to her labor.

CHAPTER XIII.

RUTH'S DISCOVERY.

"All 's fair in love."

"I saw your signal, and did not know whether to fly to the rescue, or not," says Ruth, as the young man steps back across the brook.

"I feared, myself, that I should need you ; but she became less violent afterward."

"Good Miss Bounce — her bark is so much worse than her bite ; but she does n't like gentlemen. There 's no mistake about that."

"Indeed, it 's a clear case," laughs Kenneth. "It would help take the conceit out of any one of the species, to have an interview with her."

"And that would be salutary for most of them," adds Ruth. "But why have you your satchel with you? Surely, you will stay to tea?"

"Thank you; not this evening. I must go back to the village. I have an errand to do for my patient; proud moment, when I can refer to my patient!"

"You like your profession, then?"

"Yes, if I might be allowed to follow it; and I hope I may, next Winter."

"How long is it since you graduated?"

"Two years; but I have not stopped reading, and occasionally assist at the college, just to keep my hand in."

"Yes, I know. I have a cousin who is a medical student. I believe they all love to converse about all sorts of horrors. I know I have endured martyrdom, listening to him."

"I have n't a doubt of it; but don't be alarmed. I am not going to try your patience by adding a chapter to your book of sorrows. I suppose one could shorten the distance to town, if one only knew how."

"Yes; by going through the woods. I will go with you a little way, and show you."

"Thank you; I wish you would."

So the two repass the house, and continue down the grassy slope in front. As they pass, Kenneth raises his hat to some one at an upper window.

"There is Nettie, poor little girl, she looks rather forlorn. She will be happier I think, when she gets back to school. Your friend, Miss Ivory,



has contrived to make her very thoroughly dissatisfied with herself. I feel as though she, and every one else, ought to know how little blame attaches to the child herself. She has been knocked about a good deal."

"She is at a trying age, I think," replies Ruth, wishing she could think of something complimentary to say of the young girl which would also be true. "I'm sure *I* did n't enjoy myself when I was

'Standing with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,'

I was as tall as I am now, and had n't the least idea what to do with my hands."

"Nettie's trouble extends farther than her hands, I regret to say," says the young man, seriously. "She is a strong force, for whom none of her guardians seems able to provide a proper and satisfactory outlet. But excuse me, Miss Exeter, as you are not one of the guardians, there is no reason why I should prose to you on the subject."

"If it is any relief to you, that is a reason," says Ruth.

"You are very good. Oh, Miss Ruth," exclaims the gentleman, with exaggerated mournful-

ness, "this is a world of sorrows. Do you ever get into the worst kind of scrapes?"

"Not very often."

"One of the perquisites of being a young lady, I presume."

"But I love to hear about them. Have you been getting into one? Do tell me about it," begs Ruth.

"I will not say that I, myself, am the unlucky party; but a gentleman of my acquaintance has fallen into one, and is still floundering about hopelessly in it. He wishes some one with fertile invention, would help him out. Have you a fertile invention, Miss Exeter?"

"Try me," replies Ruth, laconically.

"I will!" exclaims the other, dramatically.

"Once upon a time, there was a young lady——"

"No, no, gentleman," corrects Ruth.

"I beg your pardon, she was a lady, and is one yet, a very proud one, and beautiful. Never mind the gentleman, he labors under the disadvantage of being a fool, I'm coming to him; and this lady was young and rich, and——and charitable. She took it into her handsome head to help this gentle-

man before-mentioned, thinking he was poor and needed money. Now this gentleman's poverty was only of intellect ; so you perceive money would not serve him particularly, and this lady was mistaken."

"I see," assents Ruth, smiling.

"Now he had had a fatiguing day, and an unsatisfactory dinner before receiving this money, and when he sent it back, he inclosed it in a very impertinent note. He does n't remember just how it read — "

Ruth lays a light hand upon her companion's arm, a familiarity perfectly natural, and not unbecoming in Ruth, and with the forefinger of the other hand she writes in the empty air, reading aloud :

"So, I return to you by safe hands, the money which perhaps ought not to have left yours without a greater knowledge of the facts, and subscribe myself, Yours truly."

"The —, you do n't mean she told you ; I was sure she would never tell a living soul."

"Neither would she, had it not been that she told me before your reply came. So you are 'Yours truly,' " says Ruth, standing back in order

to take a better view of her companion in his new light.

Kenneth returns her gaze dolefully.

"I thought you must be, the day we first met you, Jean behaved so oddly. Dear me," with a long sigh, and slow shake of the head, "she'll never forgive you."

"That is what I begin to think. My only salvation lies in Miss Waite. If I could make an Amazon of her, I might stand some chance. What do you think?" asks Kenneth, looking at Ruth as anxiously as though she were the arbiter of his fate.

"I dare say that would do, but that would take some time, even supposing it were possible ; and I suppose you would prefer to have Miss Ivory forgive you now, soon."

"Now, — soon," repeats Kenneth, managing to look steadily into the sharp eyes which are reading him through and through.

"He loves her!" is Ruth's mental exclamation. "I suppose it is natural enough, although it is rather sudden, even considering that the woman *is* Jean."

"You had better not, really," she says aloud, with startling abruptness.

“Not what?” asks the other, looking for one moment the picture of detected guilt—his brief experience of Ruth’s fun-loving nature not being such as would lead him to choose her for a *confidante*.

“It will never do,” she returns, emphatically, still gazing at the handsome face returning her look so gravely.

“It will have to do for me, Miss Exeter. I can not prevent it.”

At these slow spoken words, Ruth realizes that the place whereon she stands is holy ground; but it is not in her severely practical nature to feel any awe, only honest dismay.

“Oh, I am so sorry!” she exclaims. “Why,” with a sudden burst of frankness, “she can’t bear you, you know.”

“I know it seems so,” returns Kenneth, with a man’s natural inability to grasp the reality of so unpleasant a fact; “but perhaps her feeling is only a natural resentment, and will wear off.”

“If you could only get her to do something rude to you, so as to strike a balance,” suggests Ruth, perplexedly.

The young man shrugs his shoulders.

"If that is all, I should say, if I might be permitted to judge, that the balance is decidedly in her favor already."

"Oh, those little things don't count," says Ruth, impatiently. "A girl may do all sorts of mean things with her eyebrows, and make one feel ——"

"Brow-beaten," suggests Kenneth.

"Yes, and even say very unkind things, and turn the cold shoulder upon one in the most pointed way; and yet, if she is a handsome girl, it does n't count, do n't you know?"

"Yes; I have had it demonstrated," says the other, taking off his hat and mopping his brow. Ruth catches sight of a monogram in the corner of his handkerchief. It is executed in the highest style of the art, in colors faint and Frenchy to a degree.

"I know Mrs. Erwin did that!" she declares dumbly; "mean thing — grudging Barbara a little comfort."

Perhaps the thought of the widow acts as a spur upon her fancy; at any rate, her face brightens.

"I have it. Pay her back in her own coin!" she exclaims.

“How?”

“Why, there is Barbara, poor as a little — oh, very poor. Pretend that you pity her because she has to teach, and send her some money anonymously!”

“Ruth’s enthusiasm is met by a vacant glance, which is not encouraging.

“Really, I can not see the point, and beside—”

“She might accept it, you think?” laughs Ruth, good-natured, notwithstanding the ungrateful reception of her advice. “You see, Jean is — well, Jabe calls her a ‘reg’lar capt’n.’ At all events, she takes entire charge of Barbara; and *how* she would resent your sending her money! Oh, it would be such a good thing to do, if only she did not suspect the joke. Do try it, Dr. Dart.”

“And if she did suspect the joke?”

“Why, even then, she could not help being amused at your desperate attempts to get even with her; but I must not go any farther with you. You have only to cross the river at the place you first met us, and then ‘angle’ to the——”

“I understand. I know my way well enough from here. Many thanks for your company and

counsel, Miss Exeter. I shall see you to-morrow, I hope. *Au revoir.*"

Ruth turns with a nod and smile, and retraces her steps — stopping once to look back at her new friend. He is walking slowly, with his eyes fixed on the ground. She smiles as she resumes her noiseless march.

"Jean's romance has begun early. Such a pretty scene in the play of life, if she will only behave! I have a proscenium box," thinks the girl, gleefully; and, by the time she reaches home, every ruffle and plait on the dress which she, as first bridesmaid, has decided to wear, is definitely settled in her mind.

Jean, meeting her at the door, is startled by the resounding kiss with which Ruth greets her.

"You darling!" exclaims the latter, holding Jean at arm's length, and scrutinizing her face as she has never done before. "And to think that you don't know one — thing — about it!"

"What in the world is the matter with you, Ruth?"

"Do n't look so glum, my dear! Do you know I believe I shall have the waist cut heart-shaped, and ask Dr. Dart how much arsenic it would be

safe to take, to fatten me for the occasion. If I could once get some flesh on my collar bone, I should look lovely in a heart-shaped waist ! ”

“ You would look lovely in a straight-jacket ! ”

“ It will be your fault if I ever wear one. If you are only good, and amenable to reason, I shall wear something far different. ”

But Jean is too pre-occupied to allow of her curiosity being aroused.

“ O, Ruth, ” she says abruptly, in a desperate voice, “ Barbara seems so weak and frail this afternoon. ”

“ Jean, you shall not be so worried every time B. turns pale. It's natural for some people to wilt easily, but they are the very ones who live longest, as a rule, — never very well, — never very ill. Do you know, my love, you're the most wilful person in the world ? You think you can always have your own way ; but I'm going to astonish you. One of these days I shall play at being Jean Ivory, the imperious and autocratic, and you shall be meek, down-trodden Ruth Exeter. I shall send for Mrs. Waite to come and nurse her daughter. I shall send for Mr. Ivory to come and get his, and take her away from here — and he 'll do it too,

for all your scornful airs (Jean is smiling), when I tell him all I have to tell."

"I think I shall find it very easy to become as meek as Ruth Exeter," says Jean.

"Oh, *this* is Ruth Exeter at bay. The worm will turn, you know, and the turning point in this worm's life is reached. You need ——"

"Oh, there you be, Miss Avery," interrupts Miss Bounce, suddenly appearing, "I'd be obleeged to you ef you'd come into the dinin' room a spell."

Jean obeys, and Ruth follows her.

"I've made this here egg-nog that the doctor ordered, but somehow or 'nother I can't make up my mind to put in the rum."

"The rum?" repeats Jean, as Miss Bounce regards her deprecatingly over the top of her spectacles.

"Here 'tis," continues Miss Hopeful, one hand on her hip as, with the other, she indicates the flask lying on the table.

"It's his'n. He would have it I should make it for her, an' though I admire to do anythin' I can for Miss Waite, the thought that mebbe I should put in too much, an' mebbe intoxicate her so she'd

see toads an' snakes all night, scared me. I could n't bear to take the responsibility on it."

"It is n't rum, it's whisky," says Ruth who has made an examination during this speech.

"I believe this will do her good," says Jean, brightening somewhat, and taking the whisky, she measures out the right quantity. Screwing on the top, she regards the flask on both sides, while her lip takes the least little scornful curve. "K. D.," she also reads aloud. "If K. D. is really a physician, he ought to know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Ruth's face falls as she gazes at her friend, until it is longer than Jean's own.

"Dear me," she sighs aloud, "what a misfortune it is to be born with red hair!"

"Why, Ruthie?" asks Jean, taking the glass in her hand to carry it to Barbara.

"It goes with such an absurdly sanguine temperament," replies the other, while the gorgeous dress with its extravagant train and decorations, fades into the nothingness out of which it was created.

CHAPTER XIV.


IN BARBARA'S ROOM.

"A generous friendship no cold medium knows."

The morning sunshine comes with pleasant, softened light, into Barbara's improvised bed-room and lies across the foot of her lounge. The southern windows, in the front of the parlor, are open, and the invalid can look out on the two noble elms, which cast a lacy, changing network of shadow on the grass.

The wet rose-clusters and sweet-brier, that climb over the piazza, send their fresh morning breath into the room, which has altered under Jean's wand, until Miss Bounce can find no trace of her best parlor save here and there a picture on the wall.

Not that she complains of the change. It has come to pass with Miss Bounce, that whatever Miss Ivory does, is right. And how great a thing this is, for one who loves peace and harmony, since it is highly probable that "autocratic" Jean would have her own way in any case. And what a way



it is! So graceful. So dainty. Small wonder that Miss Bounce finds no reason to complain of the changes made in her house.

Had any one told her, six months ago, that she would permit the loose valuables which decorate her room of state, to be carried up garret, and that a washstand and other bed-room belongings should be set up in the sacred spot, she would have considered the suggestion beneath the notice of a sane mortal. But no enchantress had then appeared on the scene.

As soon as Barbara's condition required that this daring transposition should take place, it took place. Miss Ivory looked about her, and decided that "all that blessed woman's trash must be put out of the way."

But the "blessed woman" was not allowed to suspect any such indignity.

"We must use your parlor a little more, now," said Jean, "but you trust me. I will take the best care of everything."

So, while the "trash" was being "put out of the way," Miss Bounce only saw her China images, ambrotypes, large spotted shells, and so on, wrapped carefully in paper, carried respectfully

up stairs, and locked in an old cabinet in the attic.

And what treasures Jean found in that attic. The very cabinet which became a haven for the "trash" was, itself, a delightful, spider-legged antiquity. There were secretaries and wardrobes with little brass handles and ball ornaments. There was a spinet which had been brought up here to make room for the cabinet organ, and best of all, to Jean, there was a spinning wheel.

"Oh, Miss Bounce, why don't you have this in your parlor?" she cried with enthusiasm. "What are you thinking of!"

"I dunno what I sh'd be thinkin' of to set up that old wheel in a parlor," was Miss Bounce's rejoinder.

"Why, for a curiosity," said Jean, earnestly.

"'Taint no cur'osity," persisted Miss Bounce, much perplexed at her boarder's freak. "Do you mean to say that you'd like that for an ornament in your parlor, if you had it?"

"Indeed I would," sighed Jean, looking at it lovingly.

"You may have it then," said Miss Hopeful curtly.

"No, no, Miss Bounce, I have n't any parlor of my own. Perhaps you'll give me that spinning wheel for a wedding present yet."

"I'd a sight sooner give it to you without yer bein' married. Still, if you'd rather you can take it then, fer I s'pose you *will* marry."

Jean brought Ruth up into the roomy garret, to exclaim and admire with her.

"Just see these old dishes, Ruth!" she cries producing some pewter plates and platters, from the depths of a chest which she has ransacked with Miss Bounce's permission.

"Ah-h! They make my heart go pewter-platter," exclaims Ruth.

"Shame on you! The idea of making a second-hand pun on these adorable relics. I tell you these came over in the Mayflower, Ruth Exeter? Perhaps Priscilla Mullins, or John Alden, or Miles Standish, has used them! See how bent and battered some of them are."

Miss Bounce avers afterward to Aunt Allen that "them two girls acts crazy sometimes. They was as tickled as two children when I gave 'em one apiece o' them pewter plates that belonged to great Gran'father Brewster. 'You behave as

though they was gold,' says I to Miss Avery. 'Gold,' says she, 'I wouldn't exchange 'em fer gold,' says she. Goin' to put them in their *parlors*, they said. Now what do you make on it!"

"I guess them old things is gettin' kind o' fashionable fer ornaments," returns Aunt Allen. "I hearn tell somethin' about it."

"Parlors! Better call 'em cur'osity shops an' done with it," mutters Miss Hopeful.

A day or two of Jean's fairy work created the pleasant spot where Barbara now spends the days of waiting.

The linen floor-covering is smooth and cool, the toilet belongings are all pretty and comfortable. Beside the couch stands a table, holding flowers, novels, and poems; while a tiny plaything of a clock ticks the hours,—sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly—away.

Miss Bounce's father and mother hold one another's hands, sitting side by side in a picture against the wall, and Barbara sometimes finds the united stare of the bridal couple rather wearisome; but altogether Dr. Dart's patient considers herself very well situated.

Jean comes into Barbara's room the morning after the events of the last chapter.

"Here is your breakfast, B.," she says, setting down a waiter upon which is arranged just enough chicken, raspberries, chocolate, and toast, to make one wish for more. "Are you going to be good, and eat?"

Barbara assumes a famished expression.

"You know I always do," she says.

"Yes, indeed, I know," replies Jean. "You will go at your breakfast in a manner to suggest that a whole roast of beef would be a welcome side dish; but when you have finished, there will be the waiter looking exactly as it did when it was brought in."

"Now, Jean!"

"Don't 'now Jean' me! Eat something;" and Miss Ivory unfolds a napkin. "There is a wishbone. See that you leave it in a condition to be wished on;" and with this, Jean goes to one of the low, south windows, and seats herself in the cool morning breeze, while Barbara wishes for Jack the Giant Killer's leathern sack, that she may dispose of the dainty meal set before her.

As she stirs the cream into her chocolate, she

looks with loving admiration at the pretty picture formed by Jean in her low seat near the roses.

"How sensible you are, always to wear white in the morning, Jean ; it is so pretty on you."

Now, it so happens that this speech smooths the way for Jean to a subject which she has been longing, all the morning, to approach.

"Certain shades of blue become me, too," she returns with unusual interest. "I have a blue muslin that I never put on, just because I have nothing to wear at the neck and sleeves, that suits me."

"What an idea," says Barbara, making two bites of a raspberry, "when you have so much lace !"

"What is lace, when one wants something else? Now, if I had wide, delicate collar and cuffs, of tatting, like yours, that would be worth while."

"Oh, do take them, Jean, dear?" begs Barbara, earnestly.

"Hint for them, and then accept them!" laughs Jean. "I think not ; but I would give fifteen dollars to any one who would make me a set."

Barbara drops her teaspoon. "That would be too much, Jean."

"Too little, if any thing," returns the other, her face averted as she watches the elm shadows dreamily weaving in and out. "I can not make two scallops, or whatever you call them, without coming to grief and having to break them off; and when I think of all the work in that set of yours, it seems more difficult than to build a house; but I do n't know any one who could do it, whatever I paid."

"My mother made my set, Jean. She would be only too glad to do one for you—only too glad to find out any thing you would like."

"Why, Barbara," how nice!" cries Jean, quickly. "Would she really—but I'm afraid she would want to give it to me."

"Certainly, she would," says Barbara.

"Then I can't have it," and Jean shakes her head, decidedly.

Barbara colors. "It is very unkind of you not to let us do any thing for you, when you remember all we owe you."

"Mousie, you hurt my feelings," says Jean, drawing near the lounge and standing still—her

own cheeks hot. "Do you suppose — do you believe that I 'remember' that you owe me any thing?"

There is a little silence ; then Barbara replies slowly :

"No, I do not believe it."

"Then listen to reason. Your mother has cares. Her time is precious. What kind of a girl should I be, to ask that amount of fine, careful work from her, that I might wear something pretty? But, perhaps, I was indelicate to mention the subject."

The artful ending of Jean's speech proves efficacious.

"You, indelicate? you darling!" exclaims Barbara, reaching out toward the fine white hand and clasping it close ; "never ! beside, I think — mamma would be glad — of the order," she finishes hesitatingly.

"Then I can satisfy my vanity with a clear conscience !" exclaims Jean, in a relieved voice. "You know my old motto, 'Strike while the iron is hot ;'" and she brings a little board, a sheet of paper and a pencil, to Barbara. "Now, write, my dear ! Do n't speak of me. Just say the set is wanted very much by a young woman, who is

given up to vanity and love of dress ; and—oh, yes ; you might as well send the money—here it is—then my responsibility is over, and I shall have nothing to do but shine forth in all my glory when the things are finished.”

Barbara writes away—a half smile on her lips, possibly suspecting the cause of this new whim.

Last evening, in clearing up the room, Jean found a half unfolded letter on the floor, and, as she laid it on the dressing-table, her eyes involuntarily lit upon these four words : “ Oh, for fifteen dollars ! ” She knew that the letter was one Barbara had received that day, from her mother, and she thought long and compassionately of the little woman whom she had seen only once, but who had taken so strong a hold upon her sympathies.

“ Another use for Aunt Jean’s money,” she decided, at last. “ It must indeed be a pressing need which induces Mrs. Waite to trouble Barbara.”

So, happy at having accomplished her purpose, Jean stands looking down at her friend who is sealing the comforting letter

“ Can’t you finish your raspberries, B. ? ” she asks.

"No ; I don't feel especially hungry this morning," says Barbara, as though this state of things were unusual.

"Why, what shall we do ? You must eat more, Barbara. Try to think of something you would fancy."

"I believe I should like some trout — such as those we had at the picnic."

"How fortunate !" exclaims Jean, brightening. "There is one in the house, now."

"But Dr. Dart caught those we had that day," objects Barbara.

Jean bites her lip impatiently, starts to speak, but refrains and leaves the room, carrying the breakfast-tray with her. As she enters the kitchen, Miss Bounce, busy at the sink, glances sharply at the contents of the waiter.

"Umph ! Don't look exactly as though a swarm o' locusts had swep' over it ; does it ?"

"Miss Waite thinks she could eat a trout, if Dr. Dart caught it," pronounces Jean.

"Don't it beat all, the fancies a sick person 'll take. All right, Miss Avery. Jabe 'll be tickled to death, to take the message to him, an' mebbe git took along."

Jean is about to leave the room, when Mrs. Erwin appears in the doorway; at the same moment, from the opposite entrance comes Jabe, bringing a load of wood.

"I want a pail of warm water, please, Miss Bounce," says the widow.

"All right," returns Miss Hopeful. "Jabe, wait a minute. Miss Avery wants to speak to you."

Miss Bounce is mistaken, for Miss Ivory does not wish to do any thing of the sort. Nevertheless, she pauses and turns toward Jabe.

"Miss Waite would like a fresh trout for her supper," she says severely.

"All right, mom," returns Jabe, with a double-shuffling tendency in his feet. "She shall hev it, ef it takes all day."

"No doubt," remarks Miss Bounce, dipping hot water out of the boiler.

Jean clears her throat.

"Miss Waite prefers — she fancies — that she should like Dr. Dart to catch the fish for her," she pursues, gazing straight over Jabe's head.

"Well, upon my word!" ejaculates Mrs. Erwin. "Such coolness! Did I ever!" and in

the midst of the little widow's fragmentary indignation and amazement, Jean, fuming within, but all coolness without, stalks from the room.

"Whose servant was Dr. Dart, last year, I wonder?" exclaims Mrs. Erwin, forgetting the hot water which Miss Bounce, smiling grimly, deposits on the floor by the sink.

"Jabe!" cries the widow, hurrying to the door through which the boy has vanished. "Are you going to find Dr. Dart?"

"Yes, mom," returns Jabe, coming back reluctantly.

"I 've a great mind to forbid it!"

"Yes, mom," repeats Jabe, digging his heel into the gravel.

"Or, stay. On second thoughts, I should like to go fishing with Dr. Dart, myself. You tell him so."

Jabe looks up, distressed.

"Oh, now, Mis' Erwin, ye 'd better not—honest, now! Where we'll go's a purty tough place for ladies."

"I sha'n't mind, and I have been able to be with him so little! I will be all ready at any time."

"Wall," says Jabe, "we fish mos'ly, stan'in' up t' our waists in water. It'll be purty queer fer ye."

"I'll risk Dr. Dart's taking me into the water. He will find some comfortable place for me."

"Jes' as you say!" returns the boy; then, appearing to meditate aloud, "I'll see t' he carries along a double allowance o' whisky, in case o' accidents while we're a passin' threw Rattlesnake Holler."

"What's that you say? Rattlesnakes?"

"Bless ye, yes! an' water snakes 'n checkered adders! But then, all ye've got to dew's t' keep yer eyes open. Folks do n't allers git bit."

"Mercy, Jabe, I would n't go for any money! I'm so glad you told me!"

"So be I," mutters Jabe, showing a clean pair of heels as he speeds away in the direction of Aunt Allen's, giving vent to his feelings, now and then, by a shrill whoop.

Taking paths best known to himself, the boy soon reaches the cottage. The jolly brown faces of sunflowers nod to him over the fence, and the sleepy yellow dog, lying on the stone outside the kitchen door, moves his tail in languid recognition.

Aunt Allen opens the door.

"Mornin', Jabe," she says, shading her eyes from the strong sunlight; then, pushing the dog with her foot; "Git aout, ye lazy thing! An' haow's all your folks?"

"So's ter be raound — all but Miss Waite. Where's Dr. Dart?"

"Gone to the post-office. I hope Miss Waite ain't no wuss."

"No," replies Jabe, laughing to himself at the old lady's repeated and ineffectual attempts to displace the dog.

"Did ye ever see the like o' him!" she exclaims. "He allers gits the hottest place he can find an' drops daown on it an' jest sleeps the hull day. I'm wore out with him. *Will* you go 'long;" and a decided poke from a broom causes the dog to raise himself deliberately, step down from the stone and sink upon the grass a few feet away, as if overcome by exertion.

"D'ye want ter see that there dog git friskier 'n a colt in abaout a second 'n a half?" inquires the boy.

"'F ye would n't hurt him."

"Who's a wantin' ter hurt him."

Aunt Allen looks at the animal and shakes her head.

"Ye can't command earthquakes, Jabe, an' nothin' short of a good sizable earthquake ud shake Cæsar up, an' I know it. I've tried everythin' else."

But Jabe's grin continues complacent. He stoops carelessly and picks up a short, thin switch, then approaches the dog.

All four of Cæsar's legs stick out straight and stiff in the sunshine. His head lies comfortably on the warm, thick turf, and the corners of his mouth curve up in a gentle smile of satisfaction as becomes one who loves,

"— at noon to lie

Serenely in the green-ribbed clover's eye."

Making some mysterious passes over the dreaming animal, Jabe begins a soft buzzing sound, gradually growing louder and louder, and ending suddenly, thus :

"Bz-z-z-z-zt !"

As he begins, he draws the switch delicately over Cæsar's back, and finishes with a little dab, which brings the dog to his feet in a flash.

Evidently Cæsar has had a painful meeting with

a bee ere this, and his wild eyes and erect ears, as he bends himself double in a search for the enemy, are sincere compliments to Jabe's imitative powers.

"Wall, Jabe, upon my word," cries Aunt Allen, her fat sides shaking with laughter. "It does take yew!"

Jabe rolls over in the grass and shouts. Cæsar looks at him, every nerve twitching and alert; then slowly it penetrates his doggish brain that something is wrong. What is it? Perhaps there was no bee! On second thoughts he believes there was none. Being broomed, pushed, and called names are things Cæsar has always been accustomed to, but evidently he draws the line at being hoaxed, for down droop his head, ears and tail as he slinks off around the corner of the house.

"See the poor feller. Come, Cæsar; here, Cæsar," calls Aunt Allen, but to no purpose.

"He's got the sensitivest feelin's for a *yaller* dog that I ever see," she continues, setting aside her broom. "I shall hev to go an' see 'f I can't find him an' coax him up; but dear me, he won't have no pride fer the next week. He won't even lay onto the door stone; see 'f he does. There comes Dr Dart"

So, while Aunt Allen goes around the house on a fruitless search for her dog, Jabe, with one more yell of delight at the remembrance of Cæsar's first expression of trepidation, hurries to meet Kenneth Dart.

"Hello Doctor," he cries, "Miss Avery sent me to find ye."

The young man's face lights up at the name.

"For Miss Waite, I suppose."

"No, not t' come an' see her, but t' ketch a trout fer her. She *fancies*, thet's what Miss Avery said, she *fancies* she'd like one thet yew ketched."

By Jabe's involuntary effort at imitating Miss Ivory's manner, Kenneth can picture very readily her reluctance to make the request.

"Well, Jabe, when people are ill we must gratify their wishes. I don't know as I ought to take you with me."

"O, I ain't a speck o' use t' hum!" exclaims the boy, his fingers and face working eagerly, "not the fust mite."

"Then I suppose that makes it all right," laughs Kenneth, lazily, "go and get the tackle — carefully, now."

The alacrity with which Jabe's clean linen trow-

sers' legs twinkle past one another on the congenial errand, brings another smile to Dr. Dart's face.

"Poor Miss Ivory," he muses, going into the house. "Consistency may be a jewel, but it is far from being ornamental, in her case, to my thinking."

CHAPTER XV.

THE GENERAL.

— His sides, with a cluster of stars, are bright.
The angler, in his basket, lays
The constellation, and goes his ways.—REED.

Shortly after a plentiful lunch, the two fishermen set out.

“I tell ye what!” says Jabo. “Lo’s go for the Gen’ral.”

“For the what?” asks Kenneth, following his guide through the woods.

“The Gen’ral—they say he’d weigh nigh onter four pound and he’s got the brightest spots onter ’im, any body ever see. His place is right clus t’ Simons’s, where I wuz goin’ t’ take yer, any way. He lives under some tree roots, in a big pool at the end o’ the brook. Folks has been arter him all Summer ; but,” with a delighted shake of the head, “I tell ye, it’s no go. That’s the reason they call him the Gen’ral, ’cause he aout-gen’rals ’em all—whatever that means. Any way, he jest

whisks his old tail an' turns up his nose at every thin' thet 's ben offered him yit."

"Then I gather that the General is a trout?"

"Yew bet! an', mebbe, them new-fangled flies o' yourn — them ye got last — 'll fetch him. What ef—*what ef*, Dr. Dart, *yew* sh'd ketch the General?"

"I shall do my best, Jabe. Rely upon that! As far as my will is concerned, the General's doom is sealed."

It is rather a long tramp to "Simons's;" but at last Jabe leads his fisherman along the bank of a babbling brook, and pauses almost reverently within a few rods of a lovely spot, where a quiet pool borders and mixes with the foaming water of the little stream, dividing it from the deeper waters of the river.

The earth is partially washed away from the roots of a tree which leans over the pool, and, under its spreading shade, Kenneth can almost fancy he sees the gleaming side of the "monarch of the brook" in the dark water.

"That 's wher' he lives," says Jabe, with a relish.

"And there he will continue to live, perhaps,"

replies Kenneth, beginning to prepare his tackle. "You have stirred my ambition, Jabe, until my heart is really set on the General's capture. Do you say that tree root is his particular haunt? Where do people stand to try for him?"

"Right along this bank, clus by the pool, there."

"Pshaw! No wonder the old fellow is shy of people who tramp around over his head. This is no place to fish that pool from. Way over there, on the other side, is where we ought to stand."

"Why, ye can't throw from there. Old Kendall — I guess he's abaout the best fisherman raound these parts — he fishes frum this side."

"I'll show you a thing or two, Jabe, my boy. You pilot me over the river, and we'll stand by that clump of alders, over there," pointing to the opposite bank.

"We kin cross easy 'nuff on the riffs," says Jabe, all interest, trotting along the bank to where the foam and swirl of the shallow water indicate the rocks beneath, and, turning up his trowsers, he wades across, followed by Kenneth, who, in his high boots, steps after him as quietly as possible.

Arrived at the clump of alders, Jabe sits cross-

legged on the grass, and watches the doctor prepare his fishing tackle.

"What is that thing a hangin' onter yer watch-chain, Dr. Dart?" he asks. "It looks like a little crockerdile."

"That is an alligator's tooth."

"By Jiminy!" exclaims Jabe. "How kinder fancy the hull set must look!"

Dr. Dart laughs softly, even at this distance, out of deference to the General.

"They don't grow this way, naturally. This is carved; but they do just as good service. An alligator is an ugly-looking beast."

"I sh'd say so! I'll bet I'd be as scairt o' one as Mis' Erwin is o' snakes."

"I'm told that alligators are not partial to white people. They like negroes best."

"Ye do n't say so!" responds Jabe. "Wall, naow, that 's cur'us." Then, after a minute's thought, he exclaims: "I s'pose they do n't like folks so rare done. They want 'em braown."

"That must be it," returns the gentleman, laughing again. "Now, Jabe, keep still. Do you see that cloud coming up toward us? By the time its edge reaches the pool, I expect this fly to touch

the water. What kind of taste do you think the General will display, if he takes no interest in that ? ”

Jabe bounds to his feet and examines the bait, which is handsome and delusive enough to deceive the gravest old wiseacre of a trout that ever swam.

“The Gen’ral looks high, he does,” grins Jabe ; “but he’d orter be satisfied with that. Now, let’s see yer throw.”

“Here goes,” says Kenneth, making his first cast ; but the fly falls several feet short of the pool. He draws back and casts again, the reel playing ; still the line proves a little short.

“Bully !” exclaims Jabe, delightedly. “Once more an’ yer there.”

For the third time the fisherman whips back the slender rod, the reel spins, the line flies out, the cloud sails over, and shadow and fly strike the still water together.

It is a breathless moment.

In artful sweeps the brilliant insect skims over the General’s abode. The stillness is only broken by the plash of a hundred tiny waterfalls in the foaming brook ; but the enticement is vain. All is still in the mysterious pool.

"Not at home," says Kenneth, finally.

"Yew *bet* he 's t' hum," says Jabe, explosively, with a side shake of the head, "an' he calc'lates t' stay there, tew. Oh—yew—old—*codger*, wouldn't I jest like t' jump in an' fetch ye up by the tail!"

"We must n't be too hasty," says Kenneth, becoming infected with the boy's excitement. "That fly was neat, but not gaudy. Every trout to his taste. We'll try another," and suiting the action to the word, soon a wonderful, gem-like creature wings its way over the pool and daintily dips its wings. Suddenly the water dimples, and is quiet again.

"Great Zebedee! *thet 's him!*" speaks Jabe, fast and breathlessly, his eyes like saucers.

The fisherman says nothing, but gazes as though life depended upon it, at the fly, circling hither and thither.

Like lightning, a gleaming trail suddenly shoots toward the bait, and is gone. The slender rod bends like a bow. For Jabe, the earth and sky come together!

"Yew 've got him! Yew 've ketched him!" he shrieks madly. "Give 'im the butt! Give 'im the butt!"

"I'll give you the butt, if you don't stop your racket," says Kenneth, nearly as excited as his companion.

Like a crazy thing, the captive splashes and darts about his long-peaceful home, while a skillful hand follows and feels his motions, and the reel spins sharply. Then the pool grows still, and there is a steady pull on the line

"Yew 've ketched the Gen'ral," speaks Jabe, slowly and solemnly.

"True as you live, Jabe, and he's sulking in right royal fashion."

"Hooray ! hooray !" shouts Jabe, utterly unable to control himself, turning hand-springs innumerable on the grass.

"Poor old fellow ! he's seeking safety in his old home among the tree roots," says Kenneth.

But all appreciation of pathos is quickly forgotten when the trout makes a wild bound, and the business of taking him begins in earnest. With frantic strength he springs, now this way, now that, feeling through all his movements the same gentle, steady force which, never slackening, draws him slowly and surely toward the shore, where Jabe is dancing around with the landing net.

"Ye 'd better lemme go in naow, ye had, really," he keeps saying, skeptical yet of the successful capture of the enemy. And when close to the "riff" the General's side glistens in the shallows, he can no longer be restrained, but, regardless of a ducking, jumps in and scoops up the struggling prize.

"What 'd I tell yer. Ain't he a whacker? Ain't he a beauty? Haow 's them for spots?" he cries, scrambling out upon the bank and executing a war dance around the gasping General, whose gorgeous armor glows and fades in the late afternoon light.

"He 's all my fancy painted him, Jabe. He 'll furnish a supper fit for a king."

"Does fish make brains, doctor?" asks the boy, smoothing the trout's jewelled side.

"Many people suppose so. If Miss Waite does absorb all the General's cleverness by eating him, she will become a very brilliant young lady, won't she?" remarks Kenneth, washing his hands in the stream.

"Can we reach the Red Farm in time for supper?"

"I guess so. Oh, t' think we 've got him!

t' think we ain't leavin' the General in the pool ! " repeats Jabe, again and again, trotting along before the fisherman, his wet trowsers' legs flapping around his ankles, as he makes a rush now and then, when the pair pass a farm-house, to inform the inhabitants of the vanquishing and capture of the great fish ; for, in Pineland, no celebrity of modern days rejoices in the local fame attained by the wary General of Simons's brook.

So, bearing the proud trophy, the two reach the Red Farm. Jabe, flushed and joyful, runs ahead, and by the time Kenneth reaches the house, he finds that his fame has preceded him. Every member of the family, save Barbara and Jean, is at the door to meet him, nearly all holding their napkins in their hands, having jumped up from the supper table before they had finished.

"Lo, the conquering hero comes ! " cries Ruth. "There are loud calls for the General, from the parlor. Do bring him in."

Even Miss Bounce joins the escort that follows the fisherman into Barbara's room, and when his basket is uncovered and the prize held up to view, there is a confusion of tongues.

"Thank you so much, Dr. Dart," says Barbara,

raising herself on her elbow. "I appreciate your kindness and the honor, equally, I'm sure."

"Ther' could n't no one else ha' done it, I keep a tellin' ye," cries Jabe.

"Well, you 've telled us enough," speaks Miss Bounce. "Go out an' attend to yer chores."

"If it had n't been for Jabe, I should n't have known anything about the trout," says Dr. Dart, kindly.

"Thank you too, then, Jabe," calls Barbara, after the retreating boy, who has begun to whistle and depart, as soon as the doctor mentions him.

A dozen times the fisherman looks at Jean for interest in or surprise at his capture; but Miss Ivory's countenance seems to indicate that three or four pound trout are every day affairs.

"We have n't weighed him yet," says Kenneth.

"Let's bring the scales right in here," suggests Ruth. "B. wants to see him weighed."

So Miss Bounce obeys the suggestion. It would seem that no transaction of life is too common, now, for the once air-tight parlor.

"Three pounds, lacking one ounce," announces Dr. Dart, examining the marks.

“Well, here, give him to me,” says Miss Bounce briskly, snatching the General up by the gills. “You ’ve flattered him up enough. Ef Miss Waite ’s a - goin’ t’ eat him to - night, he ’d better be over the coals.”

“You must stay and have supper with me, Dr. Dart,” smiles Barbara, when the trout has made an ignominious exit, followed by a general exodus to the deserted tea table. “I shall be able to do better justice to it, if I have pleasant company.”

Jean has just reached the door as Barbara makes this request, and she turns with a glowing look at Kenneth, which determines that gentleman to eat his evening meal on the roof, or in any other place that Miss Waite may mention.

“Certainly,” he replies promptly. “It is double good fortune, first, to catch such a fish, and then to eat it.”

It is probable that Miss Ivory sends Ruth into the parlor to make arrangements for the tête-à-tête supper. At all events, she comes, and, assisted by Mrs. Erwin, spreads a little table by Barbara’s couch. The widow’s cheeks are slightly flushed. These young ladies have quite appropriated her very dear friend, and her uneasiness is not allayed

by a significant glance which passes between Ruth and the doctor.

"When?" asks Ruth.

"To-morrow," smiles Kenneth, twisting his moustache.

These two words raise Mrs. Erwin's curiosity to the boiling point. Inwardly she resolves not to allow Ruth Exeter out of her sight on the following day. Barbara has not even heard them. She watches Ruth come in and out, arranging the pretty little supper; and finally the fish is brought in to crown the feast.

"It seems almost presumptuous to eat such a celebrity," she says, as Kenneth draws his chair to the table.

"That sounds well," says Ruth. "I'd like to see you creep out of eating your supper through a notion of high honor."

"Well, you won't hear anything of the sort. I'm hungry," remarks Barbara, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"Jean, Jean," cries Ruth, rushing to the door. "Barbara is hungry. How shall we celebrate?"

"We'll see her eat," says Jean, coming in and seating herself at the head of the lounge.

"Help me eat, you mean," says the queen of the feast. "If you 're good, you shall all have a taste of the General—Dr. Dart first. He deserves the first bite."

Dr. Dart takes a piece of the trout and tastes it critically. "Superior in life, the General's solidity of character and good taste never showed to better advantage than now," he says at last.

"Give me some, B." says Ruth. "I was always partial to army officers."

Just at this moment a little wad of paper comes flying through the open window and lands on the lounge.

Barbara picks it up, opens it, and reads aloud:

"mis Wat pleas ef yu kin spar the Trowt's head
And tal i shud Lik um. Jabe."

"Why, that poor boy! The idea of our forgetting all about him, when he has taken such an interest! Do, Jean, fix something for him."

Jean arranges a plate containing the fish's head, and cutting off a generous slice of meat with the tail, she adds that, then garnishes the dish with green, while Kenneth watches the movements of her pretty, graceful hands.

Carrying the food out to the piazza, Jean finds

Jabe expectantly dodging around the corner of the house.

"Never mind no plate," he says eagerly, grabbing his prizes.

The girl goes back, laughing.

"I fear the aesthetic part of Jabe's nature is undeveloped," she says, displaying the tumbled green leaves; "but let him enjoy his supper in his own way."

Neither she, nor any one of the company, dreams what this way is. No pangs of hunger have driven Jabe to make his request, although he does eat the meat from the tail, and pronounces it "lickin' good trout;" but the stars look down on a boy standing by a horse-tub, into which he drops a fish's head and tail, shakes them in the water, and snatches them out again. This he repeats several times, interspersing the performance by dances around the tub, thus combining the pleasure of triumphing over his adversary, with the business of preparing his extremities for careful preservation in a certain rough cabinet of curiosities in the barn.

CHAPTER XVI.

STRATEGIC MEASURES.

That was all I meant

—— To be just.— BROWNING.

It may be that the beratings, which Jean has received from the usually meek Barbara, have had some effect on that young lady's sharp judgment. It may be that Jean feels herself relenting toward the young physician whose short visit each day gives a fillip, not only to his patient, but to her friends as well.

Even Miss Bounce has ceased to resent these visits, and gradually Kenneth Dart has come to be called by each one, with intimate friendliness, "the doctor;" but it is a point of honor with Jean, not to alter her demeanor. Perhaps she finds her formal barriers hard to keep up. At all events, she sends, one day, to her mother for something which comes enclosed in a letter expressing much wonder in the same old strain, as to how Jean can possibly find a way to spend the amount of money

which, from time to time, has been sent her at the Red Farm.

Jean reads the letter — a half smile on her lips — then tossing it aside, takes up the enclosure. It is an envelope bearing the inscription :

"Miss Ivory : Addressed."

Jean composes her face and knits her brows, as she regards it. For some reason, Dr. Dart's offense has dwindled into something more laughable than offensive, during the last few days. It has all seemed very long ago.

Now, as she looks and looks at the old envelope, and thinks it all over, bringing back the emotions of that evening, Jean succeeds in fanning the dying embers of her wrath into a very promising flame.

"It was a mean thing to do — a small thing to do," she repeats to herself, "and I am not called upon to forget it, unless he should marry Barbara."

Looking up carelessly, the girl catches sight of her face in the glass. A sudden rush of color floods it. She covers her burning cheeks with her hands, and drops her eyes ; but she can never attempt to deceive herself with the idea again.

She has caught herself at it, and she knows now that Dr. Dart will never marry his little patient.

“Jean Ivory, you are a humbug!” is her mental comment, as she pushes her chair back from the table and walks to the window; but finding her own thoughts very poor company, she turns with an impatient shake of the head to seek Ruth, who is in her own room. Absent-mindedly, Jean forgets to knock, and opens the door.

“Who is there?” cries Ruth, suddenly.

“Excuse me,” says Jean, holding the door nearly closed.

“Is it you, Jean? Just wait one minute,” returns Ruth, with a repressed giggle; then Jean hears a sound, which might be caused by a block of wood being pushed over the bare floor of the closet; then the closet door being closed; then she is admitted.

“How red your face is, Ruth! Have you a skeleton in your closet? Let me look in.”

“No, indeed!” returns the other, with a nervous little scream, hurrying to lean against the mysterious door. “Curiosity is a bad thing, Jean. Don’t cultivate it. I was just coming to your room — that is, as soon as I had fed the — ahem!”

"Fed the what? What have you in there, Ruth?"

"Nothing that will eat; that was a mere slip of the tongue. Jabe has just brought this for you," says Ruth, walking to her bureau, and handing Jean an envelope.

"*Am* I becoming a girl of one idea?" thinks Jean, stupidly. Surely, this is the same envelope which she left a moment ago on her table. It bears the same handwriting, and reads: "Miss Ivory: Addressed." She turns it over. It is sealed.

"That is Dr. Dart's writing," she says, coldly. "What can he have written to me?"

"There is a very easy way to find out," replies Ruth, from whose face the red has not died away. "Can it be from him? He was here hardly twenty minutes ago, and saw you."

Jean hates herself for the excitement which masters and weakens her.

"I will see at my leisure," she says, carelessly, starting to leave the room.

"No, no, Jean; open it here, else I shall think there are secrets between you and the physician."

"You always were the silliest girl that ever

lived," declares Jean, forced nevertheless to return. "The physician and I do not agree very well, and that is no secret from our friends, I'm sure," and seating herself by a window, with her back to Ruth, she cuts the envelope with the scissors, while her friend relieves her surcharged feelings by a varied pantomime, half affectionate and half threatening, but all having Jean for its object, while her cheeks glow with an increasing fire, and from the closet comes that mysterious sound as of a stick of wood being dragged over the floor.

"Ruth, it's alive!" exclaims Jean, turning around suddenly and surprising her friend in the act of shaking a very unscientifically doubled fist in her direction.

As Jean turns, Ruth uncloses her hand, and smooths back her hair, with an unconsciousness beautiful to behold.

"What's alive? Something in that envelope?"

"No, the thing in your closet. What is it, for pity's sake?"

"I don't hear anything," responds Ruth, coming near, and sitting down before her companion.

"Do hurry and read your note. If Dr. Dart has written to you, I shall turn green with jealousy."

Thus adjured, Jean draws forth the note. Still another sealed envelope drops from it. She picks it up and reads aloud the address, "Miss Waite ;" then, unfolding the note, she reads aloud :

" ' Will Miss Ivory be kind enough to hand the enclosed to Miss Waite.' That is all it says, Ruth," says Jean, growing very pale ; "and yet, he must mean me to read his note to Barbara before I deliver it, else he would not have sent it in this way."

Ruth wonders if there is a delightful possibility that Jean is jealous, but she is speedily undeceived.

"He must be a coward if he has something to say about Barbara's health, which he prefers to write, rather than tell her face to face ; and yet, that must be it. There is something dreadful in that envelope ! I feel it."

Ruth is completely surprised at the turn her experiment has taken, but hopes that, in some unforeseen way, Jean's false impression may help the young doctor's cause.

"I shall read it, Ruth, whether he intended me to or not. I prefer taking the responsibility rather than to run the risk of having Barbara

shocked," and speaking decidedly, Jean opens the second envelope and draws out its contents.

Five ten-dollar bills slip down into her lap. With a face of utter perplexity, she opens the paper that has wrapped them.

"Will Miss Waite consider this money as the first salary obtained by teaching, and use the time, otherwise necessary to earn this amount, in caring for her health.

A FRIEND."

In her relief, Jean laughs as she reads this aloud.

"Did you ever hear of anything so perfectly flat?" she asks. "It's rather sweet of him to wish to help her, but how absurd to expect to be anonymous."

Ruth continues to stare and say nothing.

Jean isn't going to be angry at all, and from present appearances, Dr. Dart is to be allowed to reverse the usual order of things, and fee his patient rather handsomely. Something must be done.

"Very absurd," she echoes. "Perhaps although he wished to be anonymous to Barbara, he was willing that you should recognize his charity."

"Barbara is not an object of charity, and her friends are quite able to look out for her interests

without the intervention of an outsider," responds the other, falling into the trap.

"The more I think of this, Ruth, the more it seems unwarrantable, forced, and even ostentatious, knowing as he does that I am acquainted with his writing, having received so many written instructions about Barbara — O, Ruth!" for suddenly it flashes upon the speaker, that Dr. Dart knows of her acquaintance with his writing, at a period prior to Barbara's illness.

"Ruth, I am going to tell you something," announces Jean, solemnly, folding her hands in her lap, and gazing at her friend, whose visage appears to have acquired a chronic blush, and who finds it very difficult to sustain the steady regard bent upon her.

"Dr. Dart is the young man who returned my money so rudely."

"Your *protégé* with the clean face?"

"Do n't remind me! But why are you not overcome?" for to save Ruth's life she can not feign more than mild surprise.

"Don't you remember, I suspected it that day in the woods, but you put me off with one of your base prevarications. So this is he. Well, of

course you have forgiven him by this time ; you know I never thought there was anything in that letter to be so furious about."

"You could n't tell anything about it, because it did n't happen to yourself," retorts Jean, "and as to forgiving him — do you know, Ruth, it would not surprise me at all, his sending the same amount that I did, looks like it — and yet would he have sent this to Barbara merely ——"

"I think the correct version of the affair is obvious enough," interrupts Ruth, knowing well that Jean's tardy suspicions are aroused. "He reasons that Barbara is not able to teach, and that if you will not obviate the necessity for her beginning so soon, why, he will. What are you going to do about it? Give her the money? No doubt she would take it in very good part."

"Indeed I'm not!" exclaims Jean, firing. "I imagine when Barbara accepts money from any one, it will be from me. I never heard of so presumptuous a thing. It shows just how much real refinement the man has."

"O, Jean, when he has been so kind and devoted," murmurs Ruth, rubbing one hand over the other.

"Nonsense! I'm tired of hearing his praises sung. He is a consummate blunderer."

"Then you 'll have to reply to him, I suppose." suggests Ruth.

"No, I shall merely enclose the bills to his address, without a word."

Ruth looks blank at this decisive reply.

"It's real kind of you to be so forgiving and sweet, Jean; not many girls would let such an opportunity for revenge pass," she says, admiringly.

"I do not wish for revenge," is Jean's lofty reply; "but if I thought I could give him a lesson, or say anything that would deprive him of a little of his self-satisfaction, I might consider it my duty."

"I'm sure you've always tried faithfully to take him down," returns Ruth, pushing paper and ink toward her friend, who looks askance at them.

"From that very first day you've been rude enough. No wonder he had to laugh at the way you insisted upon crossing the creek without his assistance."

This artful allusion appeals too strongly to Jean's pride, and brings to mind too many subsequent occasions when the same has had a fall through the doctor's means, to be resisted.

Jean pulls the paper toward her, rests her elbow on the table, and her head upon one hand, while with the other she writes slowly.

Ruth rubs her hands together in silent ecstasy.

"Put lots of pepper in it," she says.

"Why?" asks Jean, absently, not looking up.

"I mean, I suppose you will make it pretty sharp," returns Ruth, rising from her chair and moving to her dressing table, where she busies herself folding up stray ribbons, while her eyes shine with mischief.

The pen scratches the paper with a vicious sound; otherwise, silence is unbroken for a time: then Jean throws down her pen and leans back in her chair.

Ruth shakes her head apprehensively.

"Poor young man! I pity him," she says.

"Do you wish to hear it?" asks Jean, smiling.

"I insist upon hearing it, only let me sit down. I am sure it's crushing."

"No, only honest;" then she reads aloud:

"Dr. Dart: I must refuse to give your last prescription to Miss Waite, and, for your comfort, I promise you she shall never know of your presumptuous interference in her behalf; for it would

be hard for her to recognize you in the ostentation and indirectness which characterize your manner of bestowing this uncalled-for charity.

"JEAN IVORY."

Ruth catches up a fan and waves it.

"Methinks I can see him now, wilting quite away," she says faintly.

"Will it do?" questions Jean, raising her eyebrows.

"Unless he rejoices in a rhinoceros hide, I think it will. Just think, Jean," with a reproachful look, "perhaps he is even now imagining your admiration and Barbara's welling gratitude."

"I hope he is; I just hope he is," replies the other, warmly; "but," with a change of manner, "I do n't believe he is, Ruth. He is not nearly so much of a conceited prig, as I thought, from that note he wrote me. Perhaps," continues Jean, staring into vacancy, "perhaps it would be better merely to return the money and say nothing."

"Oh, no," responds Ruth, dropping her fan and pouncing on the written sheet lying on the table. "This will do him good; I know it will. Where is the money? I'll just do the bills up, and then we will send them back to the hands

which they should not have left, 'without a greater knowledge of the facts.' Now, just direct that envelope, my dear."

Jean, sighing a little, obeys ; then Ruth seizes the missive.

"I will send it for you. Do n't trouble yourself any more about it," she says airily, and, kissing her hand to her friend, she leaves the room in hot haste.

"It's quite right and just," thinks Jean, left alone, justifying herself for — she scarce knows what ; then she, too, rises and goes back to her own room, where still lies the bit of paper which has come way from Boston, to enable her to come through this scene with flying colors.

Why is it that it will not look so significant and impudent as it did fifteen minutes ago ?

"Revenge is not very sweet," decides Jean. "At all events, Miss Ivory, you have given such a very generous tit for tat, that you can afford to part with this reminder of another's crime ;" and, so thinking, she holds a lighted match to the envelope, which shrivels into a flimsy black flake, and crumbles to pieces.

Meanwhile, Ruth has put the precious note be-

yond power of recall, by starting Jabe off with it. She watches until she sees him gallop away on Jean's horse ; then she turns and runs up stairs, back into her room, and closes the door behind her.

"She's gone. I hope she didn't look in the closet. What nonsense ! Of course, she didn't ;" and Ruth opens the mysterious door, and, falling upon her knees, begins to pull over some shoes and slippers on the floor of the closet.

"Where are you, you old bother ? I hope Jean has n't thrown you out. O, there you are !" and with this muttered exclamation, Ruth draws from the depths of the closet, by its resisting tail, a turtle.

"What do you mean by scrambling all around and making such a noise when I have company !" she inquires, letting go the tail, upon which the animal claws its way vigorously over nill and dale of shoe and slipper, with the evident intention of seeking seclusion in the depths of the closet again.

"Come back here, you evil-disposed creature !" exclaims the girl, regaining her hold of the short tail. The turtle is discouraged, and draws in head and legs, and upon Ruth's releasing the tail, that quickly follows, and only an inanimate shell,

marked in somewhat erratic but plain characters, "July 2nd," lies quietly on the floor of the closet.

"That's the way to behave," remarks its mistress, approvingly ; "and it's the least you can do, when I conquered all my natural prejudices in order to bring you home from the brook by your horrid little tail, and have been through fire and water with you ever since, forever being afraid you were hungry, or thirsty, or something. Do you suppose I like to catch flies for you? Do you suppose I like to let you swim around in my wash-bowl? Do you suppose I like to have you bump around in here, after I'm in bed? Yes, it's as plain as day," she continues in a tone of satisfaction, leaning over her prisoner and examining its decoration ; then suddenly sitting up as a bright idea strikes her, "Why should n't I carve in shell as well as Jean?" she thinks. "There's something more needed on that turtle, and I'll put it on this very day," and the sinking sun, looking in at Ruth's window some time later, sees her at work, a penknife in one hand and her captive in the other, while she laboriously carves two words above Jean's inscription.

CHAPTER XVII.

SUSPENSE.

You wronged yourself to write in such a case.

—*Julius Cæsar.*

Jabe, with the note which was given him with so many charges, grasped tightly in his hand, can-
ters gaily along the road, thoroughly enjoying the
unusual excitement of riding a more fiery steed
than Dolly.

He winks, and shakes his head knowingly as he
goes.

"Things is gittin' kinder thick between the
doctor an' Miss Avery," he thinks; "he's seed her
a half hour, an' they've exchanged letters, all in
one afternoon; that's business, ain't it, Firefly?"
he asks aloud, patting the horse's neck.

"Bless'd if they don't all make enough o' that
young feller any way. I dew believe *she's* makin'
up to him along o' the rest," and the picture thus
conjured up, of Miss Bounce "makin' up" to a
young man, reduces Jabe to a fit of chuckling

which lasts until he reaches Aunt Allen's door, where he alights.

"Hello Jabe, anythin' wrong with Mandy?" questions Aunt Allen, coming out anxiously to meet him.

"No; Mandy's all right," returns the boy, grasping the precious letter more tightly than ever, and winking and nodding so significantly, that Aunt Allen stares at him in wonder.

"What's the matter, then; what do you want?"

"I want the doctor; I've got suthin' fer him."

"I'll take it," stretching out a fat hand for the letter which she has just espied.

"I'll bet you won't now," remarks Jabe, grinning. "I'm to give it into his hands; where air they?"

"He's up stairs. Lemme look at it, Jabe, then I'll let you up."

Upon this, the boy holds the crumpled envelope tightly by the upper corners.

"It's frum her, Miss Avery," he says in a husky undertone.

"Then it's from a angel," declares Aunt Allen, fumbling in three pockets for her spectacles, and finally drawing them down from the top of her

head, "a angel, Jabe. Do you know all she's done for Alice Allen, to Pineland Centre? Three o' her children air goin' to school every day o' the world, lookin' as nice as anybody's folks. Most people would ha' thought it wan't no use to lay out so much money, fixin' of 'em up, for fear Allen would sell their new things for rum; but he hain't done it yet, fact is he's awful low these days. Mebbe Jabe," continues Aunt Allen, with a mysterious nod, "mebbe he's agoin' to be mercifully removed out o' Alice's way. You sh'd hear Alice talk, if you want to 'preciate Miss Ivory, an' I guess when Hopeful Bounce comes to find it all out, she'll feel pretty small pertaters."

"Mebbe I'd better tell her," suggests Jabe.

"Mebbe you had n't. You jest leave it all to Miss Ivory an' the woman she's blessed, it'll come out in good time. Go up stairs an' you'll find Mr. Dart in the front room. It's his'n."

So Jabe, carrying his hat in one hand and the letter in the other, goes clumping up the stairs. A loud "come in," greets his knock at the door, and obeying, he sees the object of his search, in his shirt sleeves, sitting in front of an open window, his chair tipped back, his feet crossed on the win-

dow-sill, and the smoke from his cigar curling out into the open air.

"I thought I recognized your fairy footsteps, Jabe," remarks the gentleman, without turning his head ; "come in and sit down."

"I brought a letter fer yer," says Jabe, advancing and laying the soiled and jammed missive in the gentleman's hand.

"It looks a little the worse for wear," returns the other, smiling, as he holds his cigar between two fingers, and turns the envelope over.

"I grabbed it purty tight ; she said ef I lost it, I'd likely go ter jail," grins Jabe.

"Who said ?"

"Miss Ex'ter ; but the letter hain't from her, it's from Miss Avery ; she said so."

Dr. Dart lowers his feet and tosses his cigar out the window. Jabe feels intuitively that he ought not to watch him, and between his curiosity, interest, and aspirations toward delicacy, his roving eyes, and open mouth, give him a more idiotic look than common.

"Not much time has been lost, certainly," mutters the gentleman, after a silence, during which he weighs the letter in his hand.

"No, Miss Avery's a reel prompt cor'spondent, I call her," returns Jabe, conversationally.

"O, you're waiting, are you?"

"Yes; won't there be no answer?"

"I hope there will, Jabe, but I doubt if you can carry it." The smile has left Dr. Dart's countenance, and he still sits, regarding the sealed letter.

"Why, I'll be keerful," says Jabe, his face falling. "I won't dirt it so much as I did that un," pointing at it.

"It is n't that. No one can carry the answer to this for me. I must do it myself. Well," with a sigh, "now for it;" and opening the envelope, he takes out the bills with much composure, and lays them on a table before Jabe's astonished eyes.

"Miss Avery's paid Miss Waite's doctor's bill," he decides. "Whew! I'd like to be a doctor myself!" but the boy's astonishment is destined to wax greater. The way his fisherman acquaintance takes his love-letter is, to say the least, novel.

Kenneth Dart gives vent to a series of brief explosions of amusement as he reads the few lines slowly and carefully, and, when he finishes, leans back in his chair with a ha-ha-ha, that rings

through the little house from garret to cellar, and it needs Jabe's sympathetic grin and amazed eyes to check his laughter.

He has feared greatly that Jean would, in some quiet, cool way, repudiate his right to joke with her upon the past. That she should accept his effort in good faith, seems too good fortune.

"Jabe, you have brought me something worth one of those bills. Take one of them !"

"Not ten dollars — for me ?" gasps Jabe.

"Yes, ten dollars for you. Take it. There is no answer. You may go ;" then the young doctor leans his elbows on his table, and, with the letter lying before him, proceeds to shake his shoulders once more over its contents.

Jabe leaves the room slowly, in a kind of happy maze, and upon reaching home, assures Ruth in secret and with solemn eyes, that when he left Dr. Dart he was still "laffin' fit to kill ; and to think of his givin' me ten dollars, Miss Exeter, fer nothin' — fer *nothin'*, yer know !"

"Well, I'm sure if he owed you ten dollars, he owes me twenty," responds Ruth, laughing merrily.

The next day, as the time approaches for the

doctor's visit, Jean Ivory discovers, for the first time in her life, what it is to feel nervous.

"Will he come," she wonders, "or will his humiliation and anger keep him away evermore?"

While she busies herself about Barbara's toilet, and arranges things as usual for the professional visit, she feels like a double-dyed hypocrite.

"Nothing ever had such a wonderful effect as that medicine," remarks Barbara, taking a bottle from the table by her side. "I suppose it is some kind of tonic, and may do only temporary good."

"Which is harm in the end," interposes Jean, with unction.

"No, I do not believe it. I have faith in Dr. Dart, and faith can almost make one over by itself. Don't you know that?"

Jean, who is braiding Barbara's hair in a tight, glossy plait, assents.

"Oh, he has been such a comfort to me, Jean. You see, his helping me to sprain my ankle, gave him more interest in me than a stranger would ever have taken. I have had such good talks with him sometimes, when you have been out of the room, and he has made me realize that while I thought I

was being very good and cheerful, I have in reality been very bad and despondent. He has given me such courage."

Barbara's earnest tone falls with a positively painful sensation upon Jean's ear. She feels so sure that Dr. Dart will send a substitute to-day, and that Barbara has seen the last of him.

Poor Jean ! She has loved her friend truly, and tenderly, and now, in a kind of panic, she realizes what she has done

"It was all mere selfishness," she tells herself. "I thought I was speaking for Barbara when I wrote that spiteful little note, but it was all for myself."

"O, how you pull, Jean !" exclaims Barbara.

"Excuse me, I was thinking." And as Mrs. Erwin and Nettie come in to talk with Barbara, Jean has an opportunity to go on thinking, and her thoughts are of the most uncomfortable.

She has had a little scheme in her mind for a few days past, for the benefit of both Barbara and Nettie, a scheme in which she required Dr. Dart's co-operation. It is a question how soon she could have brought herself to ask anything of him, had things gone on in their natural course. Now she

has put it beyond her power to ask favors in that quarter.

She sits down, quite overpowered with remorse as she looks at Barbara's pale, smiling face.

"You ought to wear a rose-colored ribbon, Miss Waite," asserts Mrs. Erwin, "that white cambric wrapper looks too unbroken."

The widow has grown very gracious to Barbara.

She soon found that it was fixed as the laws of Medes and Persians that her very dear friend was to be the girl's devoted physician, and she is woman of the world enough to accept the situation gracefully, showing no objection, save when, as happened day before yesterday, some especial favor, required of the young man whom she regards as her private property, causes her wrath to burst forth. The strict watch which, true to her resolve, she kept over Ruth Exeter yesterday, threw no light upon the cabalistic words which she had heard pass between that young lady and the doctor, and after all, the little widow comforts herself with the reflection that Dr. Dart is no more attentive to one than another of the pretty, fresh young household, while his manner to herself is unchanged.

"Yes, give me a rose-colored ribbon, Jean," assents Barbara. "Let me look as well as I can, to encourage the doctor. Beside, we ought to celebrate, for I am going to hobble around a little when he comes," she finishes, contentedly.

Jean rises slowly. "I think the penitentiary for two years would be about right for me," she decides, mentally, as she starts to get the ribbon, which she is sure will be wasted on the snuffy old doctor, who has once been pointed out to her.

"You are tired, Miss Ivory, let me get it for you. Is it up stairs?" asks Nettie, eagerly.

"Yes, dear, in my ribbon box. You know where," answers Jean, gently.

Nettie flies up stairs, two at a time, in what Mrs. Erwin would term a dreadfully hoydenish manner.

"She said 'dear,' she said 'dear,'" she repeats to herself in excited delight. "I shall tell Kenneth."

Indeed, for several days past, Nettie has basked in an unusual display of Miss Ivory's favor. As Jean's confidence in herself has been shaken in the constantly recurring tilts between herself and

the doctor, her humility has increased, and she recognizes in the ill-behaved young girl, some touch of nature which makes them kin.

When the ribbon is adjusted to the satisfaction of all, Jean leaves Mrs. Erwin to tell Barbara that it diffuses a light upon her face very becoming; that it is a woman's duty to remember these things, etc., and goes out upon the piazza to walk off her discomfort if possible. Ruth is there, Ruth and Mabel and Polly, for the old-fashioned piazza is very pleasant and cool at this hour of the day.

"Ruth, come here a minute," orders Jean, peremptorily.

Ruth obeys, and the two walk, arm in arm.

"Ruth, you—you led me on yesterday, you know you did," says Jean, abruptly.

"Yesterday?" repeats Ruth, frowning, and appearing to tax her memory.

"Yes; I do not believe I should have done it but for you."

"Jean, my love, I'm afraid you've been indulging in some of Barbara's egg-nog. Your eyes look wild, and your brow—" here Ruth places her hand on Jean's forehead. Jean pushes it away.

"Yes, it's heated," continued Ruth. "I shall have to ask Dr. Dart ——"

"O, Ruth, you will not have a chance ; he will not come, after my insulting note. I've been thinking it over. The one he wrote me, was refined kindness and delicacy itself, by comparison."

"Is that what you were referring to? And you think I made you write it, when I did nothing but praise him, and excuse him to you all the time? No one but you could say anything but praise of him. Yes," musingly, "your note must have struck him as being rather coarse."

Jean bites her lip, her eyes fill, and there is a minute of silence. Then she speaks, and her voice has a little tremble in it.

"I have tried so hard to help Barbara, and she was doing so nicely when he appeared on the scene and spoiled everything ; yet he is twice as much to her as I am, she pins her faith to him entirely, and I, who would do anything for her, have deprived her of him."

"O, perhaps not," suggests Ruth, with weak comfort.

Jean drops her arm and turns away impatiently. "I know" she says, doggedly, "that if you had

given me a minute to reflect, I should not have sent that note;" then she walks back into the house.

Ruth looks after her.

"You are quite right, you beautiful creature, and if this does n't turn out all right for you after I've made you so wretched about B., and myself so wretched with a private and undisciplined menagerie, I shall be simply disgusted," she thinks; "but if Dr. Dart does as I have suggested, Jean will be in just the right condition to 'forgive and forget all the wrong she has met,' and then, if he wishes to make love to her in a mild and decorous manner, why, I shall be quite reconciled;" and again Ruth's eyes become dreamy, and again the controversy begins in her mind as to whether the waist of that ravishing, blue-tinted dress, shall be high, or heart-shaped.

Jean is moving languidly through the hall, when Miss Bounce pounces upon her, and, taking both her hands, draws her into the vacant dining-room and closes the door.

She sits down, and Miss Bounce takes a chair opposite her. An open letter lies on the table.

For a minute the angular and usually unmoved

woman is unable to speak, while tears run down her wrinkled cheeks, and her lips and chin twitch and tremble.

“At first, I was mad at you, if you’ll believe it, Miss Avery,” is her first remark when she can speak, “an’ that shows what a hardened, obstinate sinner I’ve ben.”

This being incomprehensible to Jean, she sits, waiting patiently, with her long, lustrous eyes fixed directly upon Miss Bounce’s face. The clock ticks loudly in the interim of silence. The old lady lifts the letter with trembling hands, and hesitates a moment, biting her lips; then the flood-gates break loose.

“Oh, you’ve ben good to her — good to her, Miss Avery. She’s told me all about it in this letter,” she sobs brokenly; then Jean understands that the poor drunkard’s wife has written and told all her woe and happiness.

“She begins it: ‘When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up!’ and, oh, I have deserved it; but it cuts me — it hurts me, Miss Avery.”

Another short silence.

“I did not know how bad it was, though that’s

no excuse, for I ought to have known, when a stranger found out so easy; but Alice has ben proud with me, poor thing! I've give her reason to be, an' she always put the best foot forrard an' kep' things back from me, an' you 'll never know what you've done, never, though this letter tells it pretty fair. You can read it."

"I would rather not," Jean returns; and her effort for self-control might well be taken for coldness.

"An' now, God be praised, though the Lord forgive me for sayin' so, Allen's ben took ——"

"Her husband dead?" asks Jean, horrified.

"Yes; the funeral's to-morrer. Then, I can have Alice an' the children here, an' make up a little for what I hain't done in the past. I'm used now to comp'ny. I do n't believe I could live as I used to afore you all come, an' the parlor 'll seem empty enough when Miss Waite's gone out of it. She will be well soon, I suppose, with that there Dr. Dart a takin' care of her. I did n't know they made such men as him, an' I guess they do n't in most places," and Miss Bounce wipes her eyes.

Jean rises. "I have lived a life of mistakes this Summer, Miss Bounce," she says, in a strange-

ly humble tone, with just a suggestion of tears. "I can never be grateful enough that my effort for your sister has not been one of them."

"And there's one more thing," says Miss Bounce, looking rather shame-faced. "Aunt Allen just held her sides an' laughed an' laughed, when I showed her my bonnet, and told her you had it done over and trimmed for three dollars. She says ten dollars would n't cover it. I did n't see how they could do it; but I'm dretful green about such things."

"Please forgive me for that. It was silly of me to deceive you, perhaps. I am a very silly girl, at best; but it was such a pleasure to me to get it for you."

"Well, it'll always be a pleasure to me to wear it, an' somethin' to remember you by. It was a blessed day all around when you first set foot in Pineland."

"Thank you, Miss Bounce," returns Jean, with a gentle smile; then she goes up to her room, to watch at the window; but the evening shadows gather, and no physician, either countrified or citified, comes to the Red Farm.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CRISIS.

Out of painful phases wrought,
There flutters up a happy thought,
Self-balanced, on a lightsome wing.

— IN MEMORIAM.

"That poor darlin'! That poor darlin'!"

Miss Bounce is in love.

She had not thought it possible for her heart, which had been narrowing through so many lonely years, to expand enough to take in the affection which she has come to feel for the queen of her "rosebud garden of girls"; but during the sleepless night which follows the reception of her exciting letter, her thoughts wander many a time from contemplation of her sister's sufferings, and rest with love and yearning upon those of her benefactress.

"For she *is* suff'rin', an' that's the truth. Poor lamb! What ails her? What *can* ail her? She's nothin' on earth but a child. It do n't seem 's if it could all be worry about Miss Waite. I *know*

'tain't. How I wish I could say somethin' to her, or do somethin' fer her. They, every one on 'em, kind o' hook onto her, an' she's too young—too young. But that's the way with her kind. They come inter the world, kind o' noble an' big an' broad-minded, and folks feel it in 'em from the start. Them 'perfect women, nobly planned,' hev got to begin right off sharp, on the'r business o' warnin' an' comfortin' an' commandin', an' it must come dretful hard on 'em in the'r inexperience, sometimes, an' they must have panicky moments when the're afeard they hain't commanded right. That sweet, young thing, with nobody in *this* world to go to—fer I hear what her step-ma is, an' her pa, I reckon, 's kind o' easy goin'. Them great velvety, brown eyes o' her'n, goin' round mournin', as they was last night, pretty nigh breaks my old heart; but what can I do? Ef a thrush on the tree out there sh'd stop singin' all on a sudden, an' I knew he could n't never open his mouth agin unless somebody helped him, would I stan' any chance o' takin' of him in my hand an' examinin' into the trouble? No more could I help that young cre'tur', even though I know well enough that her trouble only seems trouble to her, 'cause

she's so young an' innocent an' tender. Show it to some old stager, an' it ud fade into nothin' at all."

Thus, Miss Bounce, in her high-posted bed, while the object of her solicitude is tossing and restlessly dreaming through the hours of the short Summer night.

At the breakfast-table, Miss Hopeful anxiously notes that there are circles under the eyes which still mourn dumbly, and the heart-strings of the spinster are wrenched anew.

She watches for an opportunity to speak with Ruth alone, and at last finds it while that young lady is cutting flowers for Barbara's vase, which is refilled daily.

"See that lovely rose, Miss Bounce," cries the girl, as Miss Hopeful approaches. "Are n't the late ones perfectly beautiful? I can give Barbara an extra pleasure to-day."

"I wish you could give Miss Avery an extra pleasure," replies Miss Bounce, sternly.

Ruth looks up, a trifle consciously: "Why, what has happened?"

"How sh'd I know what's happened? Hain't you the best friend she's got 'round here?"

“Certainly ; a regular *fidus Achates*,” returns Ruth, adding some old-fashioned pinks from the border of the flower garden.

“You need n’t call yourself no Indian names,” says Miss Bounce, “only ef you can chirk her up a little, why, do.”

“Why ? Is anything the matter ?” asks Ruth, innocently.

“Now do ask that ! Be you blind ?” asks the exasperated woman.

“No, Miss Bounce. You are right. Miss Ivory is a trifle uplifted this morning — her way of being cast down,” adds Ruth, in airy explanation, as she stoops again to the flower-bed for heliotrope and mignonette ; “but, what can be done ? Miss Ivory never snaps at people. There are no torpedoes, or fire-crackers among her ammunition ; but she keeps a cannon, loaded to the muzzle, and if it’s just the same to you, Miss Bounce, I won’t touch it off,” and Ruth leans over, to the verge of losing her balance, in pursuit of a pink geranium, “at least, not until I’ve made my will. The less I meddle with that firearm, the more will be left of me for other purposes, as some humorous writer observes.”

"Humph!" is Miss Bounce's ambiguous reply, as she marches into the house.

Ruth falls back on the grass in a sitting posture. The dew soaks into her lilac-figured cambric, but she heeds it not. The flowers drop—a fragrant heap—into her lap. She clasps her hands over the red-gold hair which waves straight back from her low forehead.

"Brace up, Ruth Exeter! this is only the beginning of troubles, and there's a whole day full before you."

Then she ties her nosegay with a blade of striped grass, and goes into the parlor.

The sphere of that usually cheerful spot, she feels, before she crosses the threshold, is one of discomfort; but she puts on a bright face as she enters.

"Here is the last rose of Summer, Barbara!" she says cheerfully.

"A very appropriate offering to me," says Barbara.

"Last and best, this is," continues Ruth, unheeding the murmur, and holding the fragrant bunch to Barbara's nose.

"Ugh! there's a bug on my face!" says the

invalid, brushing her cheek and shaking her head. "Thank you, Ruth ; they are beautiful — too good for me. I'm a cross-patch this morning."

Ruth glances quickly at Jean, who is moving about the room, looking very grave, but very handsome in a little lace breakfast-cap and white morning dress, the puffs and laces of whose sleeves are turned up to the round shoulders, while their wearer plays lady's - maid. Barbara is white and nervous, and as nearly fretful as it is possible for so patient a body to be.

"Just think ! I had hoped to walk, yesterday," she says, gazing at her swathed foot.

"Would n't you like to try now ?" asks Jean, with some eagerness. "You know I am very strong. I would not let you hurt yourself."

"No, thank you ; I would rather wait for Dr. Dart. He will come to-day, of course."

"All is, if he does n't, it will be for some good reason," says Ruth, with a furtive look at Jean ; "and if he does n't come, we have only to send for Dr. Fanning."

"Who is that ?" asks Barbara, sharply.

"The old doctor at the village. He uses snuff, and is very deaf ; but he has had ever so much ex-

perience, you know," responds Ruth, comfortingly.

"I won't have him!" declares the invalid. "I suppose Jean would prefer him. She has always hurt Dr. Dart's feelings all she could, on the score of his inexperience; but I did think he would take care of me through it all, for he knew *I* appreciated his kindness. Oh, Jean!" catching sight of her friend's face, "forgive me for being so cross. Oh, what a trouble I have been, and am, to you;" and for an ending to this speech, Barbara breaks down and cries quietly.

Jean stands still and regards her a moment; then, with a sob, she sinks into a chair, leans her bare arms on a table, and bowing her head upon them, sheds the tears that have been pressing for an outlet since yesterday morning.

At this sight, unprecedented in their little history, Barbara cries the harder, and Ruth looks in dismay from one to the other.

"How perfectly horrid!" she thinks, balancing the feather duster on one finger. "I despise being a conspirator."

For, perhaps, five minutes, the storm rages; then Barbara, in her shame and remorse, actually

rises from her sofa, and, holding out her hand to Ruth, with her assistance, hobbles across to her weeping friend.

“Do forgive me, Jean, or I shall be ashamed ever to look you in the face again. To think that I should make *you* cry ! It seems too dreadful to believe !”

There is an ominous tremble in Barbara's voice, and Jean does look up, wiping her eyes as she does so.

“I have nothing to forgive, B., especially since you have walked way over here, for that makes me feel that we can get the foot well soon, without the assistance of a doctor.”

“Oh, no ; he will come to-day, I'm sure,” returns Barbara, as her two friends—one on each side—help her back to the sofa. “Girls, I would not wish my worst enemy a sprained ankle. You do n't know how strange and painful it feels, to let the blood run into it so. If Dr. Dart were only here to tell me that it is all right for me to use it, when it feels this way !” and Barbara sinks back exhausted, while the shower does not seem to have been entirely successful in clearing the atmosphere.

Ruth feels a restraint and consciousness that make the prospect of companionship with her two friends, during the morning, uncomfortable ; so, as soon as opportunity presents itself, she goes away to her room. The first thing she does upon entering, is to lock her door ; the second, to release her prisoner from the closet.

"Come and take a little exercise," she says ; but with characteristic obstinacy, the animal shows no sign of life.

"I know what will enliven you. You want a swim ;" and Ruth moves to the wash-stand, and, half filling the basin with water, places it on the floor.

"Rather close quarters, is n't it ? but this is the last day."

At the first touch of water, the turtle swims about, sidewise, clawing the slippery sides of the bowl, with a steady, hopeless motion.

"What kind of a peacemaker will you be, I wonder ?" muses the girl, half aloud. "If I can only get you in there just at the right time, you will be sure to produce an effect. Afternoon will come, and Dr. Fanning with it, if every thing prospers ; and when he has gone, and every one

has given Dr. Dart up, and Jean is feeling bowed down with weight of woe, our gentleman will walk in upon the scene, see Barbara and have a talk with Jean, that will set matters straight ; for she will be so relieved to see him, that she will be very handsome about her note — perhaps apologize — I don't know about that, though ;” and Ruth shakes her head very doubtfully. “Then if I can make you walk in upon them, carrying that history on your back, it will make a laugh and restore their good nature ; but, I dare say, you ’ll behave badly and make trouble enough about entering, when you ’re wanted. Very well ; then I shall carry you ;” and Ruth lifts the turtle out of the bowl, and nodding in a very decided manner, restores it to durance vile.

The morning drags its slow length along, and dinner is over. Jean can hardly be said to be in a state of expectancy, there is so little hope in her heart that the doctor will come ; yet, she listens attentively when Barbara asks Mrs. Erwin her opinion on the subject of his absence.

Mrs. Erwin assumes an air of delicate injury.

“I can hardly tell, my dear,” (it is so easy to call Barbara “dear,”) “but you know he has

already neglected his affairs in the city considerably, for your sake."

"I am not insensible to it," says Barbara, earnestly.

"And a telegram may have called him away suddenly. Nothing more likely, in fact, could be thought of. I hardly see why you need look so scornful, Miss Ivo'y," turning suddenly upon Jean. "Do you not believe that explanation?"

"No."

"And yet it would be wonderful if I could not understand his actions more clearly than you."

For reply, Jean only does something "mean with her eyebrows." Her manner is very irritating, and Ruth sees it.

"Jean is not sufficiently humble, even yet," she thinks. "What an astonishing amount of discipline that girl needs!"

"It is very unfortunate," she says aloud. "I think Dr. Dart's presence and encouragement were never so much needed as now, for Barbara has just learned to depend upon him, and has n't yet arrived at the place where she can do without him;" then seeing that Jean colors, Miss Exeter smooths

her dress with the pleasing sensation of having performed her whole duty.

Nettie Dart, seated on a little stool at Jean's feet, looking up at her adoringly, evidently thinks none the worse of her ideal for having a slight difference with Mrs. Erwin. She leans toward Jean and whispers :

"Do you know why I am longing to see Kenneth, to-day?"

Jean shakes her head.

"To tell him how kind and good you are."

The older girl smiles ironically. "He knows already that I am the gentlest and sweetest of my sex," she returns.

It is an intensely warm noonday. Mabel and Polly are amusing themselves up-stairs. The more nearly interested sit in the warm parlor with Barbara. She needs their society more than common, and has evidently to exercise strong self-control, not to break out into impatient movements and speeches. Conversation languishes under the beating rays of the sun. Mrs. Erwin, in a big chair, leans back and falls into a light slumber. Ruth rocks back and forth in a rocking-chair, wondering why she should be so excited by the carrying out

of her mild little plot. Nettie picks up a book, and, seating herself by Barbara's side, begins to read aloud, while Jean, in a straight, unreposeful attitude, sits with clasped hands, looks out of the window and waits. There is nothing to see but the glowing air and parching grass. She never forgets the hour she spends thus, waiting for the doctor's visit this afternoon in August, and her exterior gives little idea of the turmoil in her mind. Alternately, the time drags and flies. One minute, the dread of meeting him sends a hot flush over her; the next, the cold conviction that the Red Farm will see him no more, causes the heavy moments to drag monotonously by. She has plenty of time to think over the little past of two Summer months; and, twist the events, trifling in themselves, but great to her, which way she will, she can not contrive to see them in a light favorable to Miss Ivory. Every one of her little remarks and innuendoes, inimical to the handsome, unprofessional-looking physician, insists upon being remembered at this uncomfortable time; and the recollection of some of them makes Jean blush for herself. Dr. Dart has always taken his revenge in being amused by them, and showing it involun-

tarily, until the last—that was too much. No wonder he prefers waiting until a future day to continue showing his interest in Barbara—a day when no officious intimate will annoy him by her impertinence.

With hands tightly folded, Jean gives herself a severe mental castigation, which ends in a desperate desire to see the man, all of whose faults are cast in shadow beside hers, whose good opinion it has taken her long, hard work to lose, and which she feels at this moment it would be worth any sacrifice to regain.

She is filled with so strong a longing that, if there is any thing in the doctrine of magnetism, it seems to the excited girl that it must bring to her this lost friend. Her brown eyes grow black as she sees a phaeton turn into the gap in the stone wall. She does not warn her companions of the physician's arrival, only sits battling the temptation to run away, which has followed her quickly granted desire.

The phaeton draws up before the piazza, and out steps the slight, bent figure of old Dr. Fanning.

For one moment, Jean's disappointment is bitter; but at the next, she rises, determined at

last to take matters into her own hands, and, her face, as she crosses to Barbara's lounge, is lighted with a new resolve ; but before she can speak, Dr. Fanning has entered the room. Jean hears vaguely that he hopes Dr. Dart may be able to resume his place, sooner or later ; then checks the dismay in Barbara's face by four words which she whispers, under pretense of kissing her, and, with a courteous bow to the old gentleman, she passes out and away, up-stairs.

She is conscious of a strange sensation of relief. It is as if she had been tossed from a stormy sea into a safe, pleasant harbor, where all is rest and quiet. All the conflict between pride and inclination is at an end.

She smiles at her faintly-tinted, radiant reflection in the mirror, as she realizes with an odd satisfaction how rude and inexcusable her conduct has been. There is no half-way possible to handsome, impulsive Jean, and as she hurries into her riding-habit, she is busily making the worst of all the injuries she ever bestowed upon Kenneth Dart, by way of making the certainty that she can compensate him for them, the sweeter.

" 'Be virtuous, and you will be happy !' What

nonsense," she thinks, with a little, scornful smile. "I was never so happy in my life as I am now, just because I have done so very wrong;" then, with sudden demureness: "It is for Barbara that I am going," she thinks. "I have as much as stolen from her, and it is my duty" — "your pleasant duty," suggests some mocking inner voice — "my duty to make her loss good," continues Jean, stoutly.

It has seemed so long, long a time, that she has been obliged to steel herself against every advance made by the young doctor, that now it is a positive relief to be about to make one herself.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN TORTOISE-SHELL.

Leaves and joyous birds went by her,
Like a dim, half-waking dream ;
And her soul was only conscious
Of life's gladdest Summer gleam.

— ANONYMOUS.

Meanwhile, Ruth is in her own room, bustling about in a little flutter of excitement. She has come away from the sight of Barbara's disappointed face, and is a trifle ashamed of her own cowardice.

"I suppose I might have stayed and tried to keep her spirits up," she thinks ; "but, no matter. 'He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day ;'" and, with this consoling reflection, she opens her closet door and looks in on her captive, who is taking a lively constitutional up and down the floor.

"Oh, yes ; you are brisk enough now," she says. "How will it be when I want you to show a little life ?"

As she speaks, the sound of Jean's door, closing



with a slam, brings Ruth to hers. What is her surprise to see a jaunty riding-hat, which she knows well, disappearing down the stairs. In a moment she is following, and joins Jean at the hall door.

“ ‘Where are you going, my pretty maid,’ and why do you look so beaming? Have you found some one who will accept the whole of your fortune this time? ”

Jean blushes to the roots of her hair, but she turns her happy face to her friend :

“ I am going for a doctor. ”

“ How many do you want? There ’s one here already. ”

“ But I ’m going for *the* doctor, ” rejoins Jean, gayly.

Ruth looks a little blank. She has not bargained for this. She wishes the metaphorical pipe of peace to be smoked by her *protégés* in her immediate neighborhood.

“ Won’t he think it a little strange? ” she ventures. “ Why do n’t you send Jabe? ”

“ Because, ” says Jean, solemnly, “ it is the least I can do, to go myself, Ruth. Dr. Dart would be quite right not to come at the bidding of a

servant, after all that has passed. He knows Barbara does not positively need him, and it serves me right to be obliged to go to him and ask a favor."

"Oh!" exclaims Ruth, much impressed, "you — you don't seem to mind it much, Jean!"

"I have no right to consider my own feelings in the matter at all," returns Jean, superbly.

Ruth stands within the door, watching her friend as she buttons her gloves while waiting for Firefly. Her eyes are round with wonder, yet she knows it is but an oft-repeated experience that she should set a ball rolling, and that Jean should whisk it along in her own strong-willed way, oftentimes in an entirely different direction from the one intended by herself.

As she stands there cogitating, she hears a sound which is happily inaudible to Jean, standing without, on the piazza. The sound is of something softly bump — bump — bumping at intervals, as of a ball rolling slowly down a flight of stairs. Ruth's face flushes, and, turning quickly, she runs half way up and meets her captive, who makes a sharp turn, just escaping a fall from between the banisters.

"Of all the ungoverned creatures that I *ever*



saw !” she ejaculates, under her breath. “How I do feel for Mr. Barnum ! One more animal would be the death of me,” and with this, she swoops upon the unhappy turtle and slips it into her pocket.

The action gives her an idea, a forlorn hope, a desperate hope that she may yet utilize the trials she has endured with her prize, since the day — a week or so ago — when she beheld him sunning himself in fancied security on a rock by the brook-side. How carefully she stole up behind, like the famous turkey gobbler, and snapped him off his resting-place.

“And now I am determined that you shall perform some use beside purifying me through suffering,” thinks Ruth, as she runs down the stairs.

Jabe has brought Firefly, and Jean mounts. Ruth goes out and stands beside her, arranging the skirt of her friend’s habit in graceful folds.

Jean leans forward, turns her head away, and endeavors to peer beneath the shade of one of the parlor windows, in order to nod a good-bye to Barbara.

As she does so, she feels a sudden jerk on her skirt, and looks back.

"Now you'll do," says Ruth, very red-faced, smoothing and pulling the habit.

"Good bye, then," says Jean, touching Firefly with the whip.

Ruth looks after her as she rides down the road.

"I did it," she thinks with satisfaction. "I only hope she won't feel in her pocket for her handkerchief before she gets there. Mr. 'July 2nd' is so discouraged by adversity, that he won't stir for a long time, unless she does. Well, I must leave the future to destiny. I'm sure I've been through enough with Jean and her silly quarrels. How glad Dr. Dart will be to see her!" and then Ruth leans against a slender pillar, and allows her imagination to conjure up a series of scenes leading to Dr. Dart's mild and decorous love-making, which is to commence, according to Ruth's most sanguine fancy, about the time Barbara is well, and after the party shall have returned to the city; while in the dim, golden perspective, the vision of that bridesmaid's dress floats supreme. Ruth waits on the piazza just long enough to alter its laces from *pointe duchesse* to *valenciennes*; then she goes in the house to see how Barbara is enduring Dr. Fanning

Meanwhile, Jean rides on. The day has advanced into a degree of coolness, but she does not notice it. She is in too strange a mood to know heat from cold. The swift motion of her horse pleases her. He carries her along at a pace in keeping with the exaltation which possesses her — a strange exhilaration, as if some delightful, new pleasure were about to become hers. All the pleasant things of her life seem present with her ; all the unpleasant, to fade into trifles. She is going to Kenneth Dart with no appearance of enmity to keep up. She is going to make her peace with him. He will look grave and hurt at first, but she will know what to say. He will forgive her, and — and — oh, yes ; he will return with her to Barbara. Jean realizes that she has come near to forgetting Barbara, and still, before the sweet, patient countenance of her friend, which she recalls with a little remorseful qualm, will rise a strong head and face, with deep gray eyes that are laughing at her, and mouth that is loving her. Jean knows the look so well. She smiles unconsciously as she hurries Firefly over the dusty road. It never occurs to the rider that the object of her search may have left the village ; and it is still with the

sparkle and radiance in eye and cheek, that she reins her horse at Aunt Allen's door, and, moving up the sunny garden path, knocks.

"Walk right in. Miss Ivory," says Aunt Allen, opening the door, and beaming all over her fat face, at sight of her caller.

"Thank you; I must not stop to make a call to-day. I would like to see the doctor, please."

"Pshaw, now! he'll be sorry enough that he wa'n't in," begins Aunt Allen.

"He is n't in?" interrupts Jean, in a tone of polite incredulity. "Then I will wait for him."

"I should admire to have you come in Miss Ivory; but, not to deceive you, I don't believe he'll be comin' back. I seen him go out with some kind of a bundle in his hand, an' 't was borne in on me then that he was goin' to the city. That's his way, to go off without tellin' me. How pale an' tired you look. Is Miss Waite very bad? You might call at Dr. Fanning's afore you go home."

"No, Miss Waite is not very ill. The heat has been so intense to-day, and I have been riding fast. I will take a glass of water, if you please," replies Jean, with a forced smile.

It is vain for her to comfort herself with the re-

membrance that Boston is very near ; that a day or two can make no difference. In her overwrought state, it would hardly have seemed direr to hear that Dr. Dart had sailed for Europe.

She drinks the water, and goes back down the path. The face of nature has changed to her. She thought the garden gay and comical when she passed through it a few minutes ago ; now, the sun-flowers hurt her eyes. She has no patience with the bees buzzing in the thick-veined hollyhocks, and the marigolds look like flowers cut from yellow paper.

"We were behind time, Firefly," she says, untying the horse ; then she mounts and rides away.

She knows the Pineland roads well, and leaves the dusty thoroughfare as soon as possible, for a green, shady path.

"It is longer, but you are hot and tired, poor old fellow, and there is plenty of time now," she murmurs, with a decided quiver of the lips, at the last.

"It is all very absurd, this deep disappointment," she tells herself ; but a consciousness of the absurdity of the position does not seem to help matters much.

The Summer stillness of the woods is lonely instead of comforting. Jean wishes it were not the birds' vacation. The song of a thrush, or cat-bird, would be the best companionship she could have, and help to heal the wound just made in her pride.

"For of course I could not feel so stricken, but through my pride," she thinks. "Perhaps the sooner I stop trying to heal the sorrows of Mr. Kenneth Dart, either of poverty or sensibility, the better off I shall be."

Whether or no this half-spoken sarcasm appeals particularly to Mr. "July 2nd," certain it is that at this moment Ruth's missionary gathers courage to bestir himself; and Jean is suddenly conscious of a vigorous, mysterious and altogether frightful scratching and pulling, somewhere beneath her habit.

She has swift and unpleasant visions of lizards, tarantulas and other forest favorites, and involuntarily screams outright. Firefly starts, and a crackling through the bushes near by announces help.

"Oh, Jabe, it's you. (Whoa, Firefly.) There is something on me! It frightens me dreadfully!"

she exclaims, shrinking away as she looks down at one spot in her habit which is heaving and falling unaccountably.

Jabe runs to her side — his grin gone temporarily.

“I feel faint. I do n’t dare to see what it is!” says Jean, growing paler.

The boy touches the agitated spot.

“Why, that’s yer pocket, ain’t it?” he asks, and unceremoniously diving his hand within, draws forth the black and gold emissary, who is quiet enough now.

“Well, I would n’t ha’ believed it, ef I had n’t ha’ seen it,” asserts Jabe. “How on airth *could* a tortle climb into yer pocket? It’s got readin’ onto it tew,” he continues, making a close and cross-eyed survey of the shell.

Jean sees through the mystery at once. She remembers Ruth’s delicate attentions at starting, and the jerk at her habit. Her cheeks redden in the reaction from her fright, and her eyes dance.

“It is strange, Jabe. It must be a fairy in disguise.”

Jabe drops the prize as though it had suddenly grown red-hot.

"Pick it up, you bad boy," orders Jean, with a little excited laugh. "I hope you have n't hurt it."

Jabe obeys, holding the shell with a gingerly touch.

"I've hearn tell these woods is full o' fairies," he says with some trepidation.

"Of course," returns Jean, with a majestic gesture, "I'm one myself."

Jabe looks up, grinning at the joke. It is a wonderful condescension for Miss Ivory to exchange so many words with him.

"Is that so?" he chuckles. "I'll tell Dr. Dart haow't I met a fairy in the woods. He's some- w'er's raound here naow, goin' fishin'."

Then he is not out of reach! Jean's heart gives a glad bound.

"Yes, I can tell you what is marked on that turtle's shell, without looking at it," she continues.

"All right! go ahead," returns the boy, with interest.

"'July 2nd,'" says the girl, in a low tone.

"So fur, so good," returns Jabe. "What else?"

"What else? Nothing else," cries Jean, hastily.

"Oh, what fer a one-hoss fairy air yew?" chuckles Jabe, executing a derisive double-shuffle.

"Why, tell me quickly, what else does it say?"

Jabe cocks his head on one side.

"'Yours — trewly,'" he reads laboriously.

Jean's great brown eyes regard the innocent shell in a kind of terror, lest further tell-tale inscriptions should burst forth upon it. But immediately she realizes that this, too, is Ruth's work. The brightness dies out of her face.

"That is an evil, taunting fairy, if it is one at all," she says, half addressing the boy.

"W'y, 'twon't hurt ye," he returns, consolingly; "thet kind don't bite. Snappers is the very Old Scratch, but these here speckled ones is jest ez innercent ez chickens."

"Oh, I'm not afraid, Jabe," replies Jean, with a half smile; "but 'Yours truly' is n't true now, and—I wish it were—that's the trouble," and down goes the burning face into her hands.

"Naow do n't, Miss Avery," responds Jabe,

much disturbed, suddenly catching sight of some object beyond the loved figure: "It's yours of ye exact! I guess there's not much around here but what you kin hear of——"

Jean has not seen the figure that stepped suddenly from behind her, with an imperative motion of the hand that sent Jabe running and jumping toward the river.

Kenneth Dart draws near, half dobbing, wholly eager.

"Look at me," he implores. "Do you — can you wish it true? Is it possible that you do not hate — that you — love me, Jean?" For slowly the white hands have come down, and the deep, soft eyes that meet his fervent gaze hold for Kenneth Dart a wondrous revelation.

Jean's whole exquisite figure droops toward her lover.

"Forgive me," she murmurs, with her hand in his, and a faint smile on her lips. "I came purposely to ask you."

"And to make me happy forever!"

"And to make you happy forever," echoes bountiful Jean.

Late in the afternoon, Ruth stands at the parlor window, drumming on the pane.

"Here comes your doctor, Barbara," she remarks coolly, as Jean rides slowly up the road, with Kenneth Dart walking by her side.

"I shall be so glad to see him," says Barbara. "Jean is the kindest friend that ever lived."

Mrs. Erwin hurries to the window, and looks out.

"What an absurd way to come from town — walking by that horse," she says.

"Perhaps it is Jean, not Firefly, that Dr. Dart is walking beside," suggests Ruth.

"Well, it's a strange thing," says the widow, her slow color rising as a suspicion crosses her mind — a suspicion that is verified when, a few minutes later, her hand is grasped in that of her dear friend, with a pressure that causes her to cry out.

"Inez!" is all he says as he wrings her hand, all unconscious of the pangs, mental and physical, that he is inflicting.

"I'm sure I'm ve'y glad for you, Kenneth," says the widow, tremulously; and the time comes when she is.

In a quiet corner of the back parlor, Jean and Ruth stand alone.

"I can not believe it, even of you, Jean," says Ruth. "Why, what are you thinking of?"


"Just at this minute — of Barbara and Nettie. From this moment, B. is Nettie's governess! Do you see all the beauty of the arrangement?" asks Jean, warming, glad to turn the conversation from herself. "Boarding school is no place for Nettie, and, under Mousie's influence, what may she not become?"

"Yes, I see," says Ruth; "and henceforth there is to be little work and plenty of money for Barbara. That is all very well; but, Jean, what do you mean — you headlong girl — by going to such extremes!"

Jean's eyes shine. "Ruth, Emerson says: 'With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do.'"

Ruth sinks into a chair and looks up at her friend.

"If the opinion of any one but Mr. Emerson is valuable, may I ask what you are calculating that your mother will say to this?" she asks resignedly.



"She will say that it is of a piece with the rest of my impulsive behavior," replies Jean.

"And," adds Ruth, "that she hopes Dr. Dart will take more care of your money than you ever did. What will your father say?"

"That he always knew I could be trusted," responds Jean, proudly, glancing across at Kenneth, who is striving bravely to bring his mind down to Barbara's ankle.

"I do believe he will," remarks Ruth, absently; for the needle is no truer to the pole, than are her thoughts to the heart-shaped waist of that blue-tinted gown. Then, giving her friend a sudden squeeze,

"Dear old Jean! did n't you fall easily into the trap we set for you?" she asks.

"You double-faced girl!" exclaims Jean, laughing back into Ruth's twinkling eyes. "I have been hearing about it, and see through all your performances at last."

"Oh, I've a profession now," says Ruth, with a serious nod; "I've found my niche in life. I am going to look up despairing lovers, and help them out of their troubles; then, when the course of true love runs smooth and business is dull, I can

assist in a menagerie. And now, Jean, in consideration of all I've done for you ——"

"Done for me! Frightened me almost to death with that poor turtle!"

"Poor turtle?" Ruth rolls up her eyes eloquently. "If you have any superfluous sympathy, you can expend it on me. Have you ever roomed with that literary amphibian?"

"No; but I've lodged it," laughs Jean.

Ruth motions her away.

"Don't imagine that your sufferings compare in any way with what I have endured. I understand that creature's character, and it has n't any at all; neither has it any mental balance, or self-control of any kind; but never mind; I will not twit you with all you owe me, for I shall take my pay in being first bridesmaid, and Barbara, Mabel and Polly can 'fall in,' as they say in the Lancers. Can't you, girls?" as Mabel and Polly approach. "By the way, speaking of Lancers, what is the use of your coming out this Winter, Jean, when you'll have to go in so soon?" finishes Ruth, with raised eyebrows.

"I do not intend to go in," replies Jean. "I am going to give parties for you butterflies of

fashion, and chaperone you to those of other people."

"Oh, Jean! that will be lovely," assents Polly, while Mabel, descriing Miss Bounce coming up the drive, hurries out to meet her.

Miss Hopeful has just returned from the funeral of her unfortunate brother-in-law, and all Miss Ivory's perfections are present in her mind when Mabel swoops upon her with the news.

"For — ever!" she ejaculates, holding up both her hands; then, in silent amazement, she follows Mabel into the parlor.

"Miss Avery," she says, advancing in all the dignity of her chip bonnet, and taking Jean's hand, while the beautiful girl looks down kindly upon her, "I should a little druther you had n't married a man, for it's apt to turn out resky; but you've got the only one I could place a mite o' reliance on. That there spinnin'-wheel is yourn from this moment;" then, as she looks across and catches sight of the beatified face bending over Barbara's bandages, she nods her head with increased confidence: "I'm sure — I feel surer 'n ever, that they do n't make 'em like him very

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often. I believe, Miss Avery, dear, that I darst to — congratulate you !”

“To be sure,” cries Ruth, with swimming eyes, “I forgot that. Jean, dearest, I congratulate you.”

THE END.





